

# **Understanding founder behavior in entrepreneurship through Internal Family Systems Therapy**

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**Abstract**

Understanding founder behavior in entrepreneurship is a complex and heavily nuanced topic. Present research applies psychological inventories such as the 'Big Five' to model traits in entrepreneurs, but falls short on providing guidance to improve operational performance. At the same time, studies show that entrepreneurs are in the midst of crisis of mental well being.

This thesis is a case study of my own experiences as founder of a failed startup and bridges the two by analysing my own changing behaviors from the frame of psychotherapy. I answer the questions: Why did I change my expressed behavior throughout the startup story, and what learning can I deduce from my own introspection to improve the odds of my success and mental well being in the future?

Based on a review of the literature in psychology and entrepreneurship, I hypothesise that a founder's unconscious motivations can predict changes in their behavior. I leverage structured auto-ethnographic writing to stimulate emotional recall and identify 'parts' of my psyche under the Internal Family Systems model of psychotherapy and understand their influence on my startup's outcome. My personal insights indicate considerably utility in this approach, however broader research is required with a variety of psycho-therapeutic models. I also make recommendations that might be of interest to other founders and investors.

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**Keywords** Psychology, psychotherapy, Internal Family Systems, entrepreneurship, startups, founders, behavioral traits, motivations, failure, operational performance, auto-ethnography

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## Preface

Anybody who has known me through last few years will understand the ridiculous depths of self rationalization that I have descended to in order to avoid having to write this thesis and confront my startup failure.

"I'm too busy", "I don't care about finishing my Master's degree", "I don't want a Master's degree", "nobody cares whether I have a Master's degree", and my favourite "a Master's degree is just a worthless piece of paper, anyway!"

What all of this psychological puppetry reveals is actually, "I'm ashamed", and I suspect I'm not the only one.

I've long considered that my own failure story, dare I tell it, might resonate with other founders and I sincerely hope that this is the case. My story is hardly outstanding and yet founder failure stories are few and far between. Regardless of the modern enlightenment surrounding the topic of failure, it continues to be a source of shame.

I've been fascinated by the dynamics of shame for years and if there's one thing that I've learned it's that a clear way out of its heady grip is to acknowledge it openly and act courageously. It is with this notion that I offer my deepest, personal introspection for the good of all entrepreneurship.

And also so that I may graduate.

My thesis is now four years in the making and, as I mention repeatedly within, it is my catharsis. But also, it is my closure, my therapy, my apology, my story and, I dare claim, my victory.

My deepest thanks and appreciations go out, first and foremost, to my startup team, who's participation in this story has made possible this chapter of my self discovery.

I want to thank Henna Airaksinen and her family, who's support and encouragement inspired me to begin this journey in the first place (Surprise! I did it!).

Also to all the staff of the International Design Business Management and Aalto Ventures Program courses at Aalto University, who placed every opportunity for success in front of me.

To Prof. Matti Vartiainen and Asst. Prof. Natalia Vuori, who's long running patience and gentle prodding aligned the stars and set me on the path towards graduation.

And finally to my dear friend James Maclurcan, without whose intellectual rigor and endless supply of effeminate, ultra-thin cigarettes my taste for ambitious writing may never have returned.

Sydney, Australia, 31.12.2019

Sebastian Nemeth

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# 1 Introduction

In August 2017, I had raised a team of entrepreneurially minded designers and legal professionals and I co-founded a startup in Helsinki, Finland targeting upcoming regulatory changes in the European Union. The space was hot and our team commanded attention, promising a compelling product to help businesses to conform.

Despite attracting funding from some of the most prominent investors in the Nordics, almost 23 months later the company filed for bankruptcy, having been unable to find product market fit in the regulatory space, nor in the legal space after pivoting. In that time, I experienced loss in many ways - financial, self-esteem, in friendship and even in my intimate relationship of the time.

The reasons for our failure are myriad and the explanations are truthfully as much emotional rationalizations as they are of academic interest. The truth is, that failure is a complex and heavy burden to bear and it bothered me - so much that I delayed the writing of this thesis to the very final 11th hour in procrastination.

The delay came from equal parts my unwillingness to return, emotionally, to the experience and a significantly damaged sense of self efficacy - the belief that one has the capability to affect their own success. Literature suggests that self efficacy is the primary quality that enables entrepreneurs to cope with failure and learn from their experiences [Shepherd et al., 2009].

Of greater interest to me was the question, where had my sense of self efficacy gone, and how do I get it back?

The psychological traits of founders are well documented, correlating traits such as ‘desire for recognition’ to entrepreneurial inception, ‘conscientiousness’ to venture success and ‘self efficacy’ to their willingness to re-engage after failure [Shaver and Davis, 2017].

Although these examples merely scratch the surface of the psychological landscape, they actually already represent much of the current psychological understanding of the profile of entrepreneurs. Founders are widely depicted to be a ‘narrow breed’, and so this simplicity doesn’t come as a surprise.

Much existing literature is concerned with taking psychological inventory of various founder populations and finding correlations between entrepreneurial inception, venture success or re-engagement following failure. After all, what else, at the demographic level can be examined?

It is my proposition that the models used in these studies are not necessarily accurate predictors of operational performance, and my criticism of them is that they neither offer individual founders nor investors guidance on enhancing venture performance.

Given a founder team in possession of an inventory of ideal behavioural traits, an appropriate composition of skill sets and in ideal market conditions, one would expect some degree of operational success. If not commercial success, then validation of product market fit, or even simply shipping the product are good indicators.

In our case, where a strongly hyped regulatory change affected almost every business in the European Union, we should have expected at least a minor, even temporary measure of success. Having spent over 200,000 EUR over 18 months

leading up to the regulation, however, we never shipped a viable product to our prospective customers.

It is easy to attribute our failures to the numerous operational challenges that faced us, but brutal honesty prevails in that the challenges, although significant, were not insurmountable. Upon honest introspection I see clearly how my own behavior shaped events and dynamics that contributed to our failure.

Of particular interest is the gradual deceptive emergence of undesired behaviors, which surfaced in me as the startup progressed and stresses correspondingly strengthened. This observation leads me to believe that we, as researchers or entrepreneurs, need to treat behavior as a continuum and not as a profile of static properties.

Simultaneously, the sphere of entrepreneurship is notorious for its extreme lifestyles, emotional pressures and toxic work cultures. Founders are known to possess an unusually high degree of self-identification with their work and, not surprisingly, recent research has indicated that mental disease is rife amongst founders and the entrepreneurial community in general [Fowle, 2018].

So potent is the influence of popular entrepreneurial culture, that some researchers have suggested that the desirable traits attributed to entrepreneurs are not actually selectors for entrepreneurship, but are psychological defensive mechanisms that have evolved due to the rigors of the field [Fowle, 2018].

Considering this and my observations in the case of my own startup, I suggest that it is likely that psychopathology and mental well being plays a much greater role in venture outcome than they previously have been given credit for.

To date, the research behind current literature is generally quantitative, utilizing static inventories of psychological traits to categorise groups of entrepreneurs. Their utility is largely predictive and these models are designed to partition populations and understand demographics, which limits their specificity and applicability.

As a result, business literature and organizational design literature does not provide concrete guidance as to how to shape *individual* behavioral traits in order to enhance mental well being and entrepreneurial performance.

The gap in the available knowledge regarding practical applicability is explained somewhat by the nuance of psychology in practice - psychotherapy. Where psychological inventories are static models describing point-in-time behavioral predispositions, the field of psychotherapy is founded on the notion of behavioral change.

In this thesis, I propose that psychotherapy holds the key to understanding changing founder behaviors and to improving entrepreneurial performance and mental well being.

Psychotherapy has been traditionally been applied in a reactionary or prescriptive manner, typically associated with mental disease and disorder. Although these perceptions have evolved considerably in recent years, the general perception of psychotherapy is that it is for people with 'mental health problems'.

It is my personal belief that the lack of literature bridging psychotherapy with entrepreneurship is attributable to an (understandable) resistance to step into the vulnerable realm of 'mental disease'. After all, nobody, not least a strong-willed founder, wants to be thought of as 'mentally ill'.

However, I, as do many subjects who engage in therapy, propose the value of

psychotherapy in the context of self discovery and preemptive, behavioral development to support entrepreneurship, where extreme uncertainty and pressures assail founders.

Towards this end, my thesis topic explores entrepreneurship from a mental health perspective and I attempt to bridge the gap in practically applicable knowledge in current entrepreneurial literature that exists between entrepreneurial performance and founders' mental well being.

At the core of my argument is the acceptance of personality psychology's model that the behavioral traits that founders exhibit are not static, but collectively resultant from their predisposed temperament, conscious and unconscious motivations.

This means that understanding both conscious and unconscious subjective motivations is key to unravelling the specific traits that lead to success or failure, and perhaps can also lend guidance in their promotion or mitigation, respectively.

My proposal is that psycho-therapeutic disciplines can be applied during startup inception, operation and failure, and that they help explain

- why initial traits change,
- how to foster the development of desired traits, and
- mitigate the development of negative traits.

Simultaneously, my thesis is an auto-ethnographic piece, seeking to understand my own behavior during my experience as a colleague, co-founder and CEO. My focus is on my emotional set and internal mental dialogue in my decision making and interactions with team members and how they contributed to my startup's failure.

## 1.1 Research question and objectives

The research question directing my paper can be briefly described as:

*Why, from a psychological perspective, did I change my expressed behavior throughout the duration of the startup?*

and additionally,

*What learning can I deduce from my own introspection to improve the odds of my success and mental well being in my future entrepreneurial attempts?*

Further, I will also seek to make a general recommendations to other founders and investors on the application of psychotherapy as a framework for improving entrepreneurial performance.

Finally, founders' subjective experiences in the startup world are generally homogenised by the requirements of academic research. Through my writing, I wish to communicate authentically some of the complex, highly nuanced founder experience.

By offering my private introspection, I wish to paint an alternative, softer picture of the founder, beyond the extremism they are known for. My hope is that it encourages other founders to come forward with their own stories and to strengthen psychotherapy's role in entrepreneurial well being.

## 1.2 Structure of the thesis

My thesis is an auto-ethnographic account and introspective analysis of the case of my own startup experiences and corresponding psychology. The paper is divided into sections that make my case for subjective analysis, apply the analysis on my own recollections and speculate on the resulting learning.

In ‘Literature review’ I describe current psychological models most commonly applied to entrepreneurship and provide an overview of the contributions of the various perspectives of business and organisational design literature. I introduce Internal Family Systems Therapy (IFST) as my chosen psycho-therapeutic model and I detail the theoretical basis for the application of psycho-therapeutic models to entrepreneurship.

In ‘Research design, case and methods’, I describe the case of my startup and explain how I leverage my own experiences as anecdotal evidence and support it with historical material obtained from my startup’s operations. I also explain my approach for analysing these events leveraging auto-ethnographic narrative writing and analysis through the frame of IFST.

In ‘Findings’ I present my own psychological profile, conscious motivations and narrate notable operational events from a storyteller’s perspective. I reflect on each of these narratives from the frame of IFST, identifying active parts and finally summarise the unconscious motivations that have been discovered and their characteristics.

In my ‘Discussion’, I speculate on the nature of the parts and their motivations in order to answer the research questions and propose concrete actions in future entrepreneurship. I make recommendations for other founders and investors with regards to predicting and encouraging entrepreneurial performance and suggest directions for future research.

## 2 Literature Review

Entrepreneurs have long been watched by scholars, professionals and journalists with particular curiosity, as a breed of human known especially for their eccentricity, their proclivity for taking risks and their role in society as cultural trendsetters and economic leaders.

Business literature has a long and dedicated history in scrutinizing the factors that contribute to entrepreneurial success. The domain of its research is broad, spanning the dynamics of economics, brand development, management and leadership, and organizational design. Implicitly, it is understood that business is an incredibly complex, multi-faceted manifestation of the combined efforts of the human organism.

Meanwhile, the study of psychology, has for the latter half of the 20th century been burdened by a reputation of being ‘pseudoscience’, rooted in ambivalence over the role of science as compared to their own clinical experience [Baker et al., 2009]. In recent decades, it has begun to broaden and mature in its objectivity and resemblance of medicine and emerge as a discipline enjoying considerable acceptance and authority in its grasp of human behavior.

It’s positive then, that in more recent history, the prevalence of cross-disciplinary literature intersecting business and psychology has increased, with some of the earliest material discussing entrepreneurship from a psychological perspective being published in the 1980s [Brockhaus, 1980] and experiencing significantly more interest since the turn of the century.

In order to better frame our understanding of entrepreneurship in a psychological context, I will briefly introduce the most relevant psychological fields and models from which entrepreneurial psychology literature draws with the intent to provide a rudimentary overview of the relevant research landscape.

### 2.1 Relevant psychological fields

The most commonly used models for understanding human behavior in practice today are found in the fields of personality and social psychology.

Personality psychology encompasses a family of theories that interpret the exhibited behavior of individuals and their variations as a function of their respective genetically hereditary disposition, their social history and environmental circumstances. Models in this field are generally concerned with trait theory, which is the major model for structurally representing and explaining the psychological dynamics resulting in observed behavior [Fajkowska and Kreitler, 2017].

Most of the leading relevant models in trait theory, including the ‘Big Five’ (or ‘five factor’) model, HEXACO and Myers-Briggs (MBTI) type profiles are provided through progressive research within the field of personality psychology.

In contrast, social psychology augments the models in personality psychology and deals with multiple individuals, concerning social influence, group dynamics and interpersonal attraction. Additionally, social psychology also considers how an individual’s exhibited behavior is affected by merely the supposed presence of other individuals [Allport, 1985].

Famous experiments in social psychology include the Stanford prison study, conducted in 1971 by Dr Philip G. Zimbardo, in which a group of college students participated in a six day simulation of the power dynamics of a prison society, in which participants were randomly assigned roles as ‘guard’ or ‘prisoner’. The experiment gained notoriety when students, although their roles were artificial, exhibited willingness to inflict and accept authoritarian measures and psychological abuse [Griggs, 2014].

Although far from a makeshift prison society, entrepreneurship has some parallels to the Stanford prison experiment whereby the sudden introduction of founders into an environment where extreme power differentials are assumed they are more likely to exhibit behaviour that is inconsistent with their normal motivations and ethical boundaries. Further, it has been proposed that such an environment is also a compelling training ground for both personal and interpersonal leadership qualities [Haslam et al., 2019].

The duality between the two disciplines has been effective when discussing the field of entrepreneurship. However, entrepreneurially focused psychological literature is generally concerned with the prediction of expected events given a particular psychological profile of entrepreneur in three domains:

- Predicting startup creation
- Predicting startup success / operational performance
- Predicting startup re-engagement after failure

In the service of these goals, several psychological models have been utilized in cross-disciplinary business literature.

## 2.2 Big Five / OCEAN and HEXACO

The ‘Big Five’ model of personality traits has enjoyed widespread praise for its simultaneous simplicity and proposed compatibility in representing the majority of the population’s expressed behavior. It represents individuals’ behaviors as scores on scales spanning five distinct factors, commonly expressed by the acronym OCEAN, that are respectively:

- *Openness to experience* (e.g. curiosity vs cautiousness),
- *Conscientiousness* (e.g. diligent/organised vs carefree/careless),
- *Extraversion* (e.g. outgoing vs reserved),
- *Agreeableness* (e.g. friendly/conceding vs challenging), and
- *Neuroticism* (e.g. sensitivity/anxiety vs resilience/self-confidence).

The ‘Big Five’ model has recently enjoyed considerable attention in the popular media being the model of choice for the British political consulting firm, Cambridge

Analytica, that in 2016 was widely credited with heavily influencing British voters' opinions regarding the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union, and also with the success of President Donald Trump's presidential election campaign.

The events make the inherent value of the combined powers of big data methods and psychological models obvious and the success enjoyed by Cambridge Analytica hints at the possibility of a deep understanding of human behavior that introduces unprecedented ethical complexities, the discussion of which are beyond the scope of this thesis.

At the same time, the 'Big Five' model has experienced considerable criticism from personality researchers for its statistically derivative approach, as opposed to being theoretically driven, who also claim it is only able to represent as little as nearly half of the existing domain of human behavior [Boyle et al., 1995].

The criticism of its statistical approach also considers biases as a result of the research's use of written-English questionnaires that were delivered to native English speaking participants, with the critics claiming that cultural variations are not represented as accurately as they would have in a multi-lingual study [Ashton et al., 2014].

In response, a lexical study by [Ashton et al., 2004] of Korean (and subsequently of other Asian and European) personality structures revealed a sixth dimension that was distinct from the typical 'Big Five' traits, which was referred to as 'Honesty/Humility', referring to the individual's propensity to exhibit 'anti-social' behaviors of deception, dishonesty and greed [Hahn et al., 1999].

The sixth dimension was incorporated into a new model, HEXACO, related to 'Big Five' but with several key differences that give it a (supposed) higher resolution in mapping human behavior. The acronym HEXACO, describing each of the relative axes of the model, stands for:

- *Honesty/Humility* (e.g. sincerity vs deceitfulness),
- *Emotionality* (e.g. sensitivity vs stability),
- *Extraversion* (e.g. outgoing vs shy),
- *Agreeableness* (e.g. tolerant vs argumentative),
- *Conscientiousness* (e.g. disciplined vs negligent), and
- *Openness to experience* (e.g. creative vs conventional).

Unique to HEXACO, beyond the introduction of 'Honesty/Humility', is the incorporation of the Big Five's 'Neuroticism' axis into 'Emotionality' and 'Agreeableness', and as a result the meanings differ slightly from their 'Big Five' equivalent [Hahn et al., 1999]. Additionally, HEXACO divides each of these axes into several facets, each offering a more descriptive and higher specificity for the subject's preferences.

It could be argued that the division of HEXACO's traits into facets is not necessarily an improvement upon the 'Big Five' model, since the Big Five's value is in its usefulness despite its simplicity. It seems natural that the HEXACO model is more accurate simply because more dimensions are added to it.

The specific advantage of HEXACO in regards to entrepreneurship, however, is in its capacity to model darker behavioral traits more accurately, which have been more commonly attributed to founders and to cater for the global and multicultural aspect of entrepreneurship [Shaver and Davis, 2017].

## 2.3 Locus of Control and self efficacy

In psychological literature Locus of Control is a commonly used term referring to one's beliefs about their own agency in the outcomes and events in their own life. To have an 'external' locus of control is to believe that one's life is largely in control by their circumstances and the people around them.

In contrast, to have an 'internal' locus of control refers to the belief that the events and outcomes of one's life is under the influence of and the result of one's own actions. This is closely related in concept to 'self efficacy', which is the degree to which one believes they have agency in their lives to influence an outcome towards success.

It has been shown that differing perceptions of an individual's Locus of Control act to moderate their self efficacy [Urbig et al., 2014]. More specifically, a predisposition to external locus of control tends to limit the degree to which an individual believes in their own agency for success, due to their perception of influencing factors beyond their control.

Self efficacy, a frame introduced by Albert Bandura in 1982, is a popular topic in the realm of business literature as a predictor of operational success and as the key determinant in an individual's capability to impart learnings from entrepreneurial failure and their subsequent likelihood to re-engage in ventures [Shepherd et al., 2009].

As such, psychological research surrounding the locus of control model is also highly relevant as a factor promoting the cultivation of self efficacy. Literature is scant in suggestions otherwise as to how to foster coping self efficacy or to identify individuals who are high in coping self efficacy.

It is well documented that one of the most enduring qualities of entrepreneurs is that in the wake of failure they have a high likelihood of re-engaging and redoubling their efforts to move forward in pursuit of success [Shaver and Davis, 2017]. This can be described as an enduring quality of self efficacy, whose resilience likely coincides with an internal locus of control.

It is also interesting to note that in a study comparing entrepreneurs' reasons for starting their business, females tended overwhelmingly to cite internal reasons for doing so, whereas males' reasons were external [Gatewood et al., 1995].

## 2.4 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

First proposed by Abraham Maslow in 1943, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is a five-tiered model of human motivation where an individual's motivations mature progressively from meeting the most basic tier of fundamental physiological needs to the fulfillment of self-actualization. It is widely recognised as one of the most



popular psychological models and is also commonly referred to in human resources, sociology and management literature.

Despite it's proliferation as a model for understanding employee motivation there appears to be, surprisingly, an absence of in-depth literature analyzing the qualities of entrepreneurs along the tiers in Maslow's hierarchy of needs. I speculate that the reason for this is in the homogenizing nature of the model and the difficulty in applying it to gain specific insights about individuals.

To demonstrate my point, consider a hypothetical questionnaire that obtains a ranking of individuals in the workplace across the tiers 1 - 5 of Maslow's hierarchy. In what meaningful way is the researcher able to group the results, other than in order of perceived tier of need? How exactly are such results actionable?

Compare this to a survey across the same workplace describing employees across the HEXACO or 'Big Five' model, it is clear that the results across specific axis suggest that various individuals would be better suited to act in or collaborate with various roles, e.g. openness to experience for creative roles or extraversion for leadership roles.

Despite this homogenization, I propose that Maslow's Hierarchy would play a valuable role in understanding the motivational dynamics of founders in entrepreneurship, due to its focus on fundamental, generalised needs. My supposition is that Maslow's hierarchy can be used to effectively explain the unconscious motivations that result in an individual's expressed behavioral traits.

It is interesting to note that, later in his career, Maslow identified a limitation in his own model in that Self-actualization was purely internally focused. He argued that an individual whose needs are truly catered for would encounter a sixth tier, which he labelled as 'Transcendence', in which their need becomes the benevolent contribution towards society and others.

The modern phenomenon of benevolent super-entrepreneurs and the increase in investment in 'impact' startups points to an emerging population of 'transcendent' entrepreneurs with social good as their primary goal [Fowle, 2018]. It would make an interesting study to examine their background and the progression of their careers as the hypothetical result of the fulfillment of Maslow's first five hierarchies.

## 2.5 Expectancy theory

Expectancy theory is an area of motivational theory, proposed by Victor H. Vroom in 1964, that describes an individual's choices and motivations with respect to various behaviours and the pursuit of goals as a combined weighting across three factors:

- *Instrumentality* - "I believe I can do the act required to achieve the outcome."
- *Expectancy* - "I believe that the act, if performed, will result in the outcome."
- *Valence* - "I believe that the outcome is worth the performance of the act."

In expectancy theory, motivation can be thought of as a chain of its three variables, where if either of them are attributed with a weight of 'zero', motivation towards the

goal also drops to zero. In order to be motivated for a particular behavior individuals must believe that the behavior's goal is achievable, likely and desired.

Expectancy theory is prominent in management theory literature, where expectancy theory is seen as a comprehensive model for employee motivation as compared to self efficacy theory and is also leveraged in education, human computer interaction and organisational design [Lawler and Jenkins, 1992].

The simplicity of the theory which also lends itself to broad applicability, is also the source of considerable criticism claiming that the valence and expectancy can act in contradictory ways and that it does not adequately model subjective motivations in the individual's context, i.e. in the case of the workplace where employer rewards do not directly correlate with increased employee productivity [Lawler and Jenkins, 1992].

In the context of entrepreneurship, a study performed on undergraduates at a university found that communicating an artificially increased Instrumentality to students' suitability for entrepreneurship resulted in an increased expectancy, but did not correspondingly alter task performance or quality [Gatewood et al., 2002].

This seems to point to the limited utility of expectancy theory in modelling entrepreneurial motivation due to its over simplification. Intuitively, the unconscious motivations discussed in this thesis will prove to be more complex than what can fit in expectancy theory's three-factor model.

## 2.6 Theory of planned behavior

The Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), proposed by Icek Ajzen in 1991, is an augmentation of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA), which models human behavior as the result of an individual's 'attitudes' and their influencing 'subjective norms' determining their motivational intent. Criticisms of TRA included a lack of consideration of the habituation of behavior and the individual's perceptions of control over them.

TPB corrects these criticisms by adding a third dimension that contributes to an individual's motivational intent - that of 'perceived behavioral control' which introduces the notion that the individual is also able to engage in behavior contrary to their attitudes and subjective norms should they believe that the behavior is out of their control.

TPB is known to be useful in scenarios modelling individuals' impulsive, or unconscious, behavior because of the dimension that one may not be in rational control of their own actions. As such, it is commonly applied in the fields of social science and welfare where the degree to which individuals' behavior can act contrary to their own best interests is damaging.

The notion that behavior is resultant not necessarily under the individual's control points to the inherent complexity underlying an individual's motivations. Although TPB rightly proposes that parts of our behavior are out of our control, it does not speculate on why they might be so. In such questions, more generalised models of psychological traits such as Maslow's hierarchy of needs might be of use.

## 2.7 Achievement motivation

An older model for conceptualizing individuals' motivations for choice and expressed behavior is Atkinson's theory of Achievement Motivation, first proposed in 1958, which expresses an individual's motivation as the difference between their motivation towards success (Ms) and their motive for the avoidance of failure (Maf). These primary factors are themselves composed of more specific sub-factors that measure the respective probability of success or failure and their incentives [Maehr and Sjogren, 1971].

Exhibiting positive achievement motivation in founders has been shown to be related to entrepreneurial performance [Johnson, 1990]. What is particularly interesting is that the individual's overall motivation (Ms - Maf) is affected inversely by their motive for the avoidance of failure.

In this model, the motivation of a founder who is highly motivated for success, but has a moderate fear of failure is equivalent to a founder who is moderately motivated for success but has essentially zero fear of failure [Shaver and Davis, 2017].

The impact of this suggests that Atkinson's theory may have the unique capability to model the complexities of founder procrastination and self-sabotage related to a fear of failure or success, something which is difficult to express within similar motivation theories such as Planned Behavior and Expectancy.

## 2.8 Characteristic traits of entrepreneurs

One study by [Ciavarella et al., 2004] examining populations of entrepreneurs under the 'Big Five' model found that likelihood of venture success correlated with the entrepreneurs' conscientiousness while extraversion, neuroticism and agreeableness had no bearing.

Interestingly, openness to experience seemed to correlate with a decreased likelihood of venture success, speculatively due to the founders' increased propensity to be captivated by alternative endeavors.

It should be noted that these results are merely indicative, and that another study [Zhao and Seibert, 2006] examined the specific differences between entrepreneurs and non-founder business managers. In this study, founders were found to have a higher predisposition of conscientiousness and openness to experience, and lower in neuroticism and agreeableness.

Missing from research is an analysis of entrepreneurs under the HEXACO model, offering the honesty/humility axis to map the darker traits of founders which have begun to receive more recent attention [Shaver and Davis, 2017]. This would be useful, for example, in understanding Machiavellian traits in founders that have been attributed to counter-productive behavior in employees [Wenzhi et al., 2017].

According to a study [Carter et al., 2003], the motivations of founders (reasons why they chose an 'entrepreneurship' career) differ from 'regular' professionals on only two group factors: Roles (performing according to expectations of others) and Recognition (desire for one's accomplishments to be known).

The same study found no appreciable difference across other factors such as self-realization, financial success, innovation, and independence. This suggests that

entrepreneurs are by and large, driven by external perceptions, indicating a deeper cause for their generally higher predisposition for self efficacy and resilience to failure [Shaver and Davis, 2017].

Entrepreneurs have long been characterised as chronic risk takers, and can be considered one of three fundamental motivations [Nicholson et al., 2005]:

- ‘sensation seeking’, desiring for new or novel experiences,
- ‘goal achieving’, desiring riskier achievements with higher reward, or
- ‘risk adapting’, enjoying the mastery over risk taking itself.

A common theme for discussion in recent years has been the propensity for founders and key business leaders to exhibit traits of psychopathy. In open discussion is whether psychopaths are inherently attracted to key business roles, or key business roles foster psychopathic traits in leaders [Fowle, 2018].

The world of entrepreneurship is a particularly highly charged environment in which founders’ personal connection to their venture, results in their successes promoting narcissism and their failures promoting anxiety. Recent research centering around the ‘Dark triad’ raises concerns about lesser discussed traits in founders such as psychopathy, narcissism and Machiavellianism and suggests that research should instead adopt the six factor HEXACO model in order to include this aspect in our understanding of founder motivations [Paulhus and Williams, 2002].

It appears that studies to date have lacked the capacity to model the presence of traits such as those in the dark triad and that their recent emergence might point to general instabilities in founder psychology that have long been suspected but previously undetected.

## 2.9 The significance of founder psyche

Founder’s behavioural traits are intuitively known to be and, through research shown, to have a critical effect on team dynamics, play a defining role in the establishment of organisational culture and in team attraction, selection and attrition and thus on operational outcomes [Kyser and Hill, 2016].

Founder’s psychological shortcomings are, therefore, equally detrimental to team dynamics and it has been shown that dark triad aspects of founder personality, such as Machiavellianism, can be directly correlated with exhibition of counterproductive work behaviors in employees [Wenzhi et al., 2017].

One of the key success factors of entrepreneurial teams in terms of team dynamics is a group sense of entitativity, which is a personification and identification of the specific team of individuals involved in the venture, as opposed to any particular individuals or the legal organisational entity. This perception also holds true as a criterion adopted by angel investors in assessing the potency of a potential investment [Hogg et al., 2007].

Other research recommends investors be wary of the overwhelming and disproportionate influence of a single ‘lead’ founder on the team due to their high influence leaving their undesired or neurotic traits unmediated by other team members

[Ensley et al., 2000]. Broader studies show that investors should emphasize personality and temperament of founders over experience, skill set and team composition [Knight et al., 2018].

All of this research suggests that so great is the potential for individual founders' psychological shortcomings to negatively impact the team, that individual founders' psychological traits which may also be beneficial to the team, are preferred to be mitigated and mediated by a broader team composition.

## 2.10 Entrepreneurship and mental well being

The rigorous and challenging domain of entrepreneurship is universally known to be a near guarantee of a founder's repeated encounter with failure. Conjointly, the founder's naturally high personal association of their self-esteem with the failed venture lends itself to a psychological battering with feelings of bereavement and diminished self worth [Shepherd, 2003].

Extensive research has shown that entrepreneurs exhibit psychological traits that make them naturally more prone to a higher incidence of depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, substance abuse and suicide [Freeman, 2015]. The same research reveals that 49% of participants report some form of mental health issues, and that a widely reported epidemic of suicides exist in Silicon Valley.

One of the factors that contributes to these alarming findings is the extreme and dysfunctional lifestyle of entrepreneurs, born of the ramen slurping, Modafinil™\_munching mythos that pervades startup life and is highly romanticised, particularly in the Bay Area [Fowle, 2018]. The same findings also note an alarmingly wide prevalence of eating and sleeping disorders and behaviors that are associated with an increased likelihood of drug use and risky sexual activity.

In a higher altitude reflection on the psychological predispositions of founders [Fowle, 2018] suggests that the psychological traits described in recent literature as desired by founders of startups are actually developed as a defensive response to the rigors of entrepreneurship.

Beyond the argument of nature vs nurture, there appears to be a significant disparity between the statistically selective picture that predictive models paint of entrepreneurship and founders' actual subjective experiences.

## 2.11 The case for subjective analysis of founders' unconscious motivations

The various instrumentation of psychological traits covered are successfully employed in a wide variety of scenarios, however in the field of entrepreneurship, none seem to provide a comprehensive model for understanding founder motivations.

Expectancy and achievement motivation theories are criticised as oversimplified and are both shown to be befuddled by nuance and more complex motivational scenarios. The theory of planned behavior shows that behavior is not always in our control, despite an understanding of our basic motivations. Yet, under Maslow's

hierarchy of needs we understand that all have the same fundamental motivations that drive our individual behavior traits.

The 'Big Five' and Hexaco instrumentations are useful as predictive models but fail to suggest how a founder's exhibited behavior might change given a change in their underlying beliefs and motivations and offer no guidance as to how to affect entrepreneurial performance.

Existing research is overwhelmingly quantitative, whose intended utility is to be predictive by drawing on generalizations, focusing on the link between behavior and performance, but not on the subjective nature of the link between individual founders' psychopathology and their exhibited behavior.

Through my own founder experience I can bring no more poignant anecdotal evidence that behavioural traits are not constant than the utterance of the following, haunting words from my (then) loved one, "You truly are a different person now to who you were when I met you".

It was apparent to her then as it is clear to me now that my own behavioral disposition changed throughout the startup in response to its stresses and rigors. On this basis, I challenge the utility of the aforementioned predictive models due to their inability to predict individual behavioral change.

Regardless, the prevalence of psychological disorder amongst entrepreneurs not only points to likely inconsistencies in their underlying motivations throughout their startup story, but also betrays a dire need for better understanding of the psychological landscape of an individual's personal experience of entrepreneurship.

Prevailing in literature are operational discussions such as the selection of cultural themes in an organisation or creation of rituals to promote self efficacy. Other literature proposes equity incentives to motivate founders and employees or suggests the preferable psychological traits identifiable by investors to choose founders with a higher likelihood of entrepreneurial success.

Meanwhile, there is little to no mention of the obvious, comparatively low cost and substantially high yield investment of treating the collective psychological disease of the entrepreneurship community, which appears against all odds to already be performing remarkable well despite considerable psychological disadvantage.

I propose that a series of deeper introspective qualitative research efforts need to take place in the field of entrepreneurship, that consider in detail the individual stories of founders and their unique circumstances. In the interest of progress in this direction, I humbly offer my own story.

## **2.12 A psycho-therapeutic approach**

As distinct from the trait inventories introduced by the personality and social psychology fields, the role of psychotherapy is to instigate change in the expressed behavior of the individual. By their very nature, they are intended to model a change in behavior in a somewhat predictable manner, for the sake of the patient's ability to progress towards psychological well being.

There are reportedly over a thousand recorded types of psychotherapy in existence, greatly varying in success and popularity and ranging from pseudoscience to evidence-

based therapies. Their underlying premise, however, can be generalised as being that our expressed behavior is the result of our underlying conscious and unconscious motivations and that those motivations are able to be changed deliberately.

In order to engage with the founders' subjective, unconscious motivations then, techniques from psychotherapy are applicable. Although many modern evidence-based therapies may be applicable to this end, the comparative effectiveness of individual psychotherapies is beyond the scope of this thesis. With the goal of characterising and revealing unconscious motivations, one applicable psycho-therapeutic practice that is already familiar to me is Internal Family Systems Therapy.

## 2.13 Internal Family Systems Therapy

Internal Family Systems Therapy (IFST), introduced by Richard C. Schwartz in 1995, is a form of individual psychotherapy in which considers the mind a 'family' of sub-personalities called 'parts'. Under IFST, each part has its own behavioral traits including fears and other motivations [Schwartz, 1995].

Parts may be healthy, but specifically IFST focuses on parts that are associated with extreme or undesired behavior. The IFST model argues that such behavior is a result of the dynamic of parts that exist in three roles: exiles, managers and firefighters.

Exiles are parts that carry shame, pain and other emotional wounds, typically accumulated from past trauma, and are the focus for the defensive roles of managers and firefighters, known collectively as 'protectors' [Williams D., 2017].

Managers control our latent behavioral patterns on a day-to-day basis, influencing our preferences and actions so as to preemptively protect us from pain inflicted by others or from an exile's trauma returning to our consciousness [Engler, 2013].

When managers' care taking fails and exiles are threatened with exposure or seek attention, firefighters jump forward in response and keep the exile shielded or hidden, sparing us from the exile's related pain by distracting it with extreme, often impulsive behavior [Engler, 2013].

Regardless of their respective roles, at the core of IFST is an integrative appreciation that each part intends, in its own way, to make a positive contribution to the whole and as such, are treated with compassion and not suppressed, fought with or coerced [Schwartz, 1995].

At the heart of IFST is the agency of the individual, referred to as the 'Self', to relate to each part and aid empathetically in its transformation, which takes place through a process called 'unburdening', a systematic release of accumulated pains or negative beliefs carried by the various extreme parts causing undesired behaviour [Schwartz, 1995].

Dysfunctional behavior is viewed as the repeated activation of protectors who, with often conflicting motivations, result in contradictory behavior that prevents the individual from moving forward. Through the process of IFST, the individual learns to lead through their Self, gaining the trust of their parts and helping them unburden, so as to promote consistent, Self-desired behavior [Williams D., 2017].

In order to reveal an individual's parts, the therapist guides them through a



process of emotional recall that focuses on revealing Sensations, Images, Feelings and Thoughts (SIFT) that may be characterised as parts. The subsequent personification of those parts transforms them into distinctive entities that play recognisable roles in the individual's psyche and enables the Self to relate to them specifically [Williams D., 2017].

## 2.14 Theoretical framework

My theoretical framework for addressing my research questions assumes a personality psychology frame, in which behavioral traits are considered to be a result of an individual's physiological predisposition, environmental factors and their own personal motivations. Also, I assume that through self development and changing circumstances, the motivations are able to be fundamentally altered.

I generalize across the range of motivation theory frameworks presented and describe motivation as either conscious or unconscious, so that it is our unconscious motivation that is responsible for undesired, unexpected and extreme behavior that may adversely impact entrepreneurial performance.

My theoretical framework could be succinctly expressed as:

*Conscious + unconscious motivations → behavioral traits → team dynamics, venture outcome*

In this frame, conscious motivations can be identified as those reasons for a decision or action that you would explain to another person given inquiry, and unconscious motivations the unspoken ones. Unconscious motivations, then, can be considered to be driven the underlying needs of parts under the IFST model, of which those expressing 'extreme' behavior are most relevant.

In order to answer the research questions in this theoretical frame, I formulate the following hypothesis:

First, I demonstrate the applicability of unconscious motivations in the understanding of expressed founder behavior.

*Hypothesis 1: Motivations revealed by 'extreme' parts under IFST are appreciably different from my consciously expressed motivations, and more consistent in explaining my changing behavior.*

My expectation is that unconscious motivations, although more generalized will act as a better predictor of my behavior, including the changes in my traits. Next, I will establish that my behavioral traits did, in fact, change throughout the course of my startup journey.

*Hypothesis 2: My expressed behavioral traits at startup inception, operation and failure respectively differ significantly according to the HEXACO model.*



My expectation is that the HEXACO model will reveal declines in behaviors correlated with entrepreneurial success and an increase in antisocial behaviors. Finally, I speculate that the cause of the change in my behavior.

*Hypothesis 3: The compared ‘maturity’ of my conscious and unconscious motivations under Maslow’s model, expressed as a position on his hierarchy of needs, differ appreciably.*

My expectation is that in my case, the maturity of my unconscious motivations will be less than those that I expressed consciously.

### 3 Research design, case and methods

#### 3.1 Research approach

My research takes the form of a qualitative case study analysing the events of my own startup experience, leaning heavily on my own experiences as anecdotal evidence and is highly subjective.

I have developed an auto-ethnographic approach to documenting my own experiences, where the act of narrative composition itself simultaneously serves as a tool to stimulate emotional recall and trigger insight and introspection [Ellis, 1999]. Additionally, the narrative serves to communicate directly some of the entrepreneurial experience to the reader.

Further, the act of narrative writing induces a kind of dissociation from events, in which the emotions and thoughts are directed onto the page and with this channel available, they are spared from rumination and personal judgement. The result is an enhanced willingness to write honestly and engage in vulnerability [Pace, 2012].

In order to guide my narrative writing and build on a foundation of factual information, I painstakingly reconstructed events from my startup based on the operational data that has remained available since its bankruptcy. This data is not only used to guide my narratives and the case study, but to evaluate the operational efficacy of the startup at various stages and identify the events that caused significant changes as subjects of my narrative recall.

Finally, I undertook a lengthy process of deep introspection for each narrative, in which I identify my parts and become familiar with their personality across narratives. I construct a complete picture of their relationships in order to extract a clear picture of their, and thus my, motivations.

#### 3.2 Case description - my startup story

In order to introduce my startup story, I present the following case description. Please note that the names of many persons and companies (predominantly potential customers) have been redacted or pseudonymised in order to preserve anonymity.

*In November 2013, I had packed up my home in Australia and just arrived in Finland for love and in search of adventure. My girlfriend at*

*the time, Kaisa, introduced me to a world of wild lands, loyal people and proud beauty. She was, then, studying to be a lawyer and, being my only connection to the country, her lawyer friends also soon became my own.*

*Almost three years later, in October 2016, I sat, beer in hand, with my friend Ron, a data and privacy lawyer, as he explained to me the incredible intricacies of the upcoming General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). I connected with the problems, enthusiastically suggesting that they were largely technical and solvable in the same manner.*

*I am a software developer who is ambitious to reach more deeply into entrepreneurship. At the time, I fancied myself as possessing enough technical experience to have insights that most others wouldn't. I had just completed most of my Master's degree at Aalto University, called International Design Business Management, and its influence steers me towards collaboration and product discovery.*

*"I think we can solve this GDPR problem," I ponder, sipping my beer. Ron's master thesis in law school had been specifically regarding GDPR and this is right up his alley.*

*General Data Protection Regulation is new regulation in the European Union, which was to come into effect on 25 May 2018, promising ambitious new rights for European citizens to their own personal data stored in and used by corporations in digital services or otherwise, by imposing heavy penalties ranging up to the greater of 20 million EUR or 4% of their annual turnover.*

*"We should do something about this," I tell Ron, the market potential clear to me and he enthusiastically agrees.*

*By the end of that year I had enrolled in Aalto Ventures Program's Startup Experience course, a 12-week 'startup simulation' that teaches the basic, broad skill set that founders need to bring ideas to enterprise. My goal is to use the course as a test bed for the concept, to test my potential as a startup team leader and to evolve the idea and figure out whether there is any commercially viable product within our reach.*

*I pitch a concept for a Software-as-a-Service platform that would allow corporations, big and small, to host a privacy portal, enabling basic data privacy and access rights under the new regulations to their customers. I rapidly assemble a team, recruiting Lisa (business design), Hammond (product and digital design), Harvey (business and serial founder) and Mia (business researcher).*

*The angle, conceived by Ron and I, takes the position that, were it to come to a dispute between a business and the Data Protection Authority (DPA), the internal governance of the business would not be nearly as important as the impact of their efforts to their users. We propose that the best strategy to avoid fines was to treat the problem as a customer service issue.*

*We called the imaginary company ‘ShotPro’ and begin to speak openly and publicly about our proposal. We speak for the first time about our idea with large enterprises such as Elisa, OP and specialist firms like Massive Law and Everttech and hear a common message - they, and their customers and business partners, are all lacking a clear path to GDPR compliance.*

*By the conclusion of the course in March 2017, ShotPro had gained enough traction to get the attention of investors such as Manuel, Sandy and Wave Ventures. The heads of Startup Experience encouraged us to enter Kiias Team Up in early April to develop the concept further, pitch to a broader audience and gain exposure.*

*On April 9 2017 (...my birthday!) we won first place at Kiias Team Up and secured our first funding, 1000 EUR, and a place in their accelerator program. Amongst the judges were (again) Wave Ventures, Manuel and several other prominent local investors. We started to talk to them about founding a company with an Angel round and began to work out of Startup Sauna at Aalto University.*

*Following the conclusion of the course, the original team members eventually disbanded leaving myself, Ron and Sylvia, who is an organizational designer turned entrepreneur, to recruit a new team with whom we could push forward our negotiations for angel investment. Some of our advisors from the course stayed connected to us and, in particular, Vito, former CTO, remained in close proximity.*

*Sylvia had joined us towards the end of the Startup Experience course, to facilitate design workshops for the original team and her role gradually grew to include hands-on design and operational management roles. As her commitment to the project and responsibilities grew, she soon joined us as one of ShotPro’s founders.*

*In May 2017, ShotPro was accepted in the startup hub, Maria 01, as a member and we commenced product development (codename: initial). At this stage I am the only software developer in the company and my split responsibilities push us to search for another full-time developer to join the team.*

*Over the next few months our negotiations with Wave Ventures, in particular, are fruitful and they introduce us to Lifeline Ventures to discuss a potential co-investment. We hire Jo, a UX designer and Lexington, a sales professional.*

*On 1 August 2017, Ron, Sylvia and I formally establish ShotPro as a company, investing jointly 51,000 EUR of our own funds in anticipation of the settlement of an angel round with Wave and Lifeline Ventures. I take the role of CEO and tech lead, with Sylvia as COO and product owner.*

*We start a monthly email newsletter for potential partners, investors and other interested parties to keep them up to date of ShotPro's progress.*

*ShotPro attends the MyData 2017 conference in Tallin, Estonia, having collaborated on a data privacy workshop event and meets several competing startups established in the personal data and privacy space. We're encouraged that our approach is sufficiently differentiated compared to the other proposals and are re-assured as to the validity of our approach.*

*We meet Tieto and discuss potential collaboration and at the same time, Vito introduces us to Gameit and we introduce our approach to their technical and legal executive teams resulting in an ongoing dialog regarding GDPR.*

*Following the establishment of the company, it becomes apparent that a saleable product is a ways off, and Lexington departs the team. Meanwhile, two developers, Tori (junior) and Johnny (senior) join the team and with a stronger technical capability, we move forward on our investment round.*

*On 18 August 2017, ShotPro signs an investment agreement for an angel round with Wave Ventures and Lifeline Ventures for 90,000 EUR and our announcement is met with interest from media outlets including Le Monde in France and Talouselämä, Helsinki. We hire Tania, a startup minded law student, to aid in our digital communications.*

*Despite Johnny's enthusiasm, his external work commitments mean he is unable to commit to ShotPro full-time, and he soon departs the team. At the same time, Tori who joined us in the capacity of an intern, is unable to get the hands-on mentorship she was seeking when she joined and departs to another, more mature startup.*

*At this stage, product development is missing our milestones and we continue looking for suitable developers to ease my technical workload. Meanwhile, ShotPro's public presence in local privacy and legal networks is growing suitably.*

*Gameit invite us to participate in their regular, internal GDPR task force meetups, making us privy to insights from many key players in the mobile games industry, such as Supercell and Next games.*

*Through our meetings with Gameit and Co, our product concept develops, reflecting the need for a unified standard data model through which personal data usage can be expressed. This increases the technical complexity of our product significantly.*

*In September 2017, ShotPro's public-facing website at ShotPro.com is released, inviting users to express interest in our product. Our strategy to establish a public presence is to create a knowledge base containing direct answers to common GDPR-related questions and broadcast them as articles on social media. At the same time, we would allow users to*

*search for companies who have signed up to our product and are ‘personal data friendly’.*

*In October 2017, in response to our inability to recruit compatible software developers, we commence our first product rebuild (codename: prodigy), in order to switch our technology stack from Microsoft .Net and C# to a NodeJS and Typescript, which are more popular in Finland.*

*At the same time, a significant portion of our time, in particular Sylvia’s, is consumed with events and public promotion. ShotPro is invited to attend the inaugural Legal Design Summit (LDS) as coaches and presenters. ShotPro also hosts a workshop side-event with the goal of shedding light on how personal data can be structured and visualised for every-day users.*

*During Slush in November 2017, ShotPro meets with representatives from several large corporations, including Samsung and Finnair, but is unable to gain traction, presumably due to the inability to deliver a convincing product demo. We also make an agreement with representatives from Servley for content collaboration and meet Rocco, a student developer from 42, Paris, who agrees to intern with ShotPro in the new year.*

*The team also moves into a vacated office at Maria 01 and accepts a year-long rental contract.*

*After a pitch at Aalto University’s Startup Circus, we meet Sandy again, who agrees to join the team as an advisor and board member, with a view to mentoring the startup in good governance and generating business opportunities.*

*Towards the end of the year, it becomes apparent that our team’s composition, specifically its over-emphasis of design resources and lack of business and technical capability, was ineffective and depleting our financial reserves.*

*We commence discussion about reorganization of the company to release design resources and use the freed funds to engage professional software development and recruitment services. Stepping away from design becomes a source of tension between Sylvia and myself.*

*We continue to experience difficulties with the production of content for the knowledge base and so lack subject matter for our social media campaigns. By the end of the year, Aleksandra departs the company reflecting our need to cut back on non-essential resources.*

*We engage Codesoft Labs to carry forward software development of the product and TRecruit to commence recruitment activities for a senior front-end software developer. Simultaneously, we engage Jenna, a graphic designer, on contract in order to aid in the development of assets for a new product website to communicate our shifting product concept.*

*In the new year, we conclude Codesoft’s contract citing mounting costs and insufficient progress. During discussion of our technical strategy,*

*we conclude that making use of Google's Firebase Platform-as-a-Service technology is an appropriate shortcut to accelerate our product development and a third product rewrite (codename: uluru) commences to support it.*

*In February 2018, falling short on funds, we apply to Business Finland for TEMPO funding and also for the European Union's Horizon 2020 Small-to-Medium-Enterprise (SME) instrument. We continue recruitment for technical resources.*

*We pitch an early prototype to OP Lab and Paroc to mild interest. Although the parties are interested, the product lacks maturity and commercial viability. Greater technical competency is clearly needed.*

*At the end of February, Ron, Sylvia and I have a discussion in which we address the significant conflicts and differences of perspective that have occurred between Sylvia and I. We suggest a parting of ways, stating the need to cut back all design resources in the company due to dire economic circumstances and the need to focus on technical competency.*

*Sylvia disagrees and suggests that given the applications for funding from Horizon 2020 and Business Finland, it is still possible to ship a product and make use of the functioning design team that she has carefully assembled. The disagreement, and our proposal to part ways becomes a point of conflict going forward.*

*In March 2018, ShotPro is invited to present to Lifeline's portfolio companies at a special GDPR-specific event. Our product is met with lukewarm reception and discussions reveal that most organisations' implementation of GDPR consists of governance documentation and update privacy policies. It seems that investment into GDPR-related activities is minimal, and that most are waiting to see how the regulation will be enforced post-deadline May 25.*

*Shortly thereafter, TEMPO funding from Business Finland is approved and ShotPro is also granted access to an guarantor-free business loan from Finnvera, which we agree not to engage until a later date (if at all).*

*Towards the end of the month, Rocco arrives from Paris to commence his internship and begins work on visualization technology to power our standardised personal data model explorer. We continue to recruit through TRecruit and engage also NHire to search for a senior developer.*

*Our collaboration with Servley commences in earnest with a schedule for a series of guest-authored GDPR-related articles for their website, which results in a significant boost in traffic to our website and approximately a dozen parties interested in joining our pilot program. At this stage our product is still not fit for customer use.*

*In April 2018, we are notified that our application for funding from Horizon 2020 has been rejected. In response, we reach out to Manuel and Lifeline Ventures again to discuss the possibility of a convertible note in*

order to fund a final push of development. Manuel is tentatively interested and refers us to demo to his contact at Cleverup, in order to gauge our product's viability.

Simultaneously we engage our contact at Evertech and start a collaboration with their legal counsel and head of IT to map their complex personal data network. We learn that our product is short of several critical features, such as mapping storage locations and preventing it from being a commercially viable product.

As our engagements with Cleverup and Evertech cool, we engage Finnvera to take the business loan in order to fund the hire of a new developer, Vladimir.

In mid April, in light of our design expenditure, financial situation and poor technical and product development standing, and following a board majority on the decision, the company is restructured in order to focus on a purely technical product development approach and Sylvia, Jo and Jenna's engagements are terminated.

The next weeks consist of heated negotiations regarding termination agreements and the redemption of Sylvia's shares. The team takes time to adjust to the new circumstances.

Meanwhile, Vladimir is onboarded into the development team, taking ownership over scrum and the front-end and progress on the product takes a leap forward. Julio, a data privacy and security specialist from F-Secure also joins our team as an advisor.

On May 25, 2018 the GDPR deadline arrives, and ShotPro has not shipped a commercially viable product, nor been in a position to benefit from the significant hype in the lead up. Many companies and industry professionals settle in to observe the fall out of the regulation, which is mild and largely disappointing.

It becomes apparent through our observations and discussions with experts in our network that it will likely take several years before enforcement catches up and a market for a technical solutions emerges. In response, in June 2018 we raise the topic of a product pivot for discussion by the board.

In July 2018, following many months of relationship problems, Kaisa and I broke up, bringing much of ShotPro's business activity to a halt as I figured out personal affairs and moved into a new home. My leadership ability and motivation suffer meanwhile as I adjust to a new life.

Towards the end of the month, the technical team agrees that the data modelling technology we have developed so far is valuable, and could be adapted for other purposes. We commence a short experiment (codename: baguette) to determine whether it can be operated with a graph database, opening up the possibility of cloud-scale data processing.

*In August 2018, we bid farewell to Rocco, who returns to 42 in Paris, and Vladimir and I are left as the only two remaining full-time employees. I cease taking salary completely.*

*In September following promising experiments with graph database technology, the board recommends a pivot to repurpose existing technology to focus on the legal field.*

*The proposal recognises similarities between legal work and coding and aims to solve the problems of collaboration, complexity and change control within the legal sector by utilizing the best practices and technological approach from software development.*

*The unique feature is a machine learning algorithm that learns from the clause, document and matter templates that lawyers use in order to enable intelligent, language-agnostic document recognition and change control.*

*The name LegalPro is chosen to describe the new product and a new technology stack (codename: stack) commences for it. As a result of this decision to pivot, Sandy whose expertise does not lie in the legal sector, departs the board of directors.*

*In October 2018, due to deviation from the original project plan, Business Finland denies us our final TEMPO funding installment, and the company starts to engage law firms as pilot partners who would fund co-development of the proposed product.*

*In order to aid in this search, a barebones prototype and sales pitch is developed in order to communicate the concept for sales activities. Vito joins the team part time as a business development representative.*

*From this point to the end of the year, the product demo is pitched to over a dozen pilot prospects, including law firms [3x law firms], and in-house legal teams at [6x large corporates and banks].*

*In November, we consider the possibility to engage directly with individual lawyers, as opposed to just law firms and in-house legal teams and we build a custom, legal-specific crowd-funding investment campaign to be released in time for Legal Design Summit 2018.*

*Attending Sleetmakers, an LDS side-event, we test the product concept and the popularity of the crowdfunding campaign with individual lawyers, and decide to shelve it until a later date.*

*In order to fund further development, we start looking for short term software development contracts with Helsinki-based technical consultancies.*

*In January and February 2019, through [tech consultancy] we pitch on a contract for [a clothing manufacturer]'s side site build, but aren't chosen as the vendor. Meanwhile, we continue our sales activities seeking pilot partners, pitching to law firms [3x law firms] and also to in-house legal teams at [2x large corporates].*



*On 19 February 2019 the board of directors announced that all remaining share capital has been lost, and we're officially out of funds and I start to negotiate payment plans with each of our remaining creditors.*

*In March 2019, our promising sales dialog with [law firm] gets delayed due to the release of a new version of related technology, iManage, which [law firm] want to inspect before engaging with us.*

*In response to this lost prospect, Vladimir departs the company due to financial obligations.*

*In April 2019, the 2018 VAT return from Vero is used to pay back as many creditors as possible and the board agrees to file for bankruptcy, which is submitted in June.*

*In July 2019, [executor of the estate] takes control of ShotPro as executor of the estate.*

*On 11 November 2019, ShotPro's bankruptcy lapses and it formally ceased to exist.*

### 3.3 Data collection

In order to prepare for the narrative of the case study, operational records from several sources were collected and collated into a detailed timeline of events across the whole startup. The operational records that were sourced include:

- Email history
- Slack history
- Board meeting minutes
- Commit statistics from code repository, indicating:
  - Project lifetime
  - Proportionate developer productivity and contributions

In order to determine my basic psychological profile I took the official HEXACO personal inventory test available online at: <http://hexaco.org/hexaco-online> on 27 December 2019.

My test results in full are available at Appendix [A](#).

In order to determine my conscious motivations, I recall my initial motivations for beginning the venture expressed in video form recorded during Aalto Ventures Program, in which I detail my expectations and desires for the startup.

### 3.4 Analysis methods

In order to conduct a rigorous reconstruction of the operational events, stimulate my emotional recall and provide a factual foundation for my narrative writing, I manually collated the data from each of the operational sources into an extensive timeline describing significant events throughout the lifetime of the startup.

The interpretation of code commit statistics were particularly important for determining the operational efficacy of the startup at various points in time. In order to extract commit statistics, an open source tool called ‘Gitql’ was used in order to make a structured query that extracted all commits to all related repositories by startup team members and exported them in comma separated value (CSV) format.

Next, the data was represented in spreadsheet format and pivot tables were used in order to group and filter relevant data. Using this approach, I was able to report on the relative lifetime of technical projects and the various proportion and size of contributions by individual developers.

The resulting timeline and analysis of operational records is available at [Appendix B](#).

I used the timeline to extract and chronicle significant operational events while writing the case description. Specifically, I reflected on my motivations from the earliest days of the story and correlated them with the video evidence describing my initial motivations for beginning the venture.

Having completed the case study and my initial motivations, I began a systematic process for each of the significant operational events I noted in the process. For my narrative writing for each event underwent an identical process:

- Writing occurred in solitude, or where solitude was not possible with noise reduction and a work screen to minimize distraction,
- Writing occurred at the same time every day, so as to reinforce the habit of recall,
- I wrote in the first person, in order to stimulate my emotional capacity, however discouraged giving attention to the ‘storytelling quality’ of the text.
- In the case where I felt hesitation to write about my thinking, I made it a point to especially include those details.
- I focused on my emotional state of mind and to chronologically replicate my train of thought in the form of dialogue.
- I minimized editing, so as to preserve the originality and cardinality of thinking,
- I immediately reflected on the piece, and described in short-hand, the recognizable parts playing a role in it.

The above process ensures a high level of emotional and detailed recall and is parallel to IFST’s approach of extraction, where the therapist stimulates the

individual to recall Sensations, Images, Feelings and Thoughts (SIFT) through discussion.

Once I had completed the narratives, I revised the parts that had been revealed and constructed a relationship network diagram depicting their interactions, which formed the basis for my analysis and discussion.

The full diagram is available at Figure 1.

Next I wrote a piece reflecting on the detailed motivations of each part, identifying each as exile, manager or firefighter and detailing the emotive substance underlying it. My process for classification was to undergo an internal process in which I engage the part and ask the following questions, adapted from [Williams D., 2017].

*Do you feel rejected? Lonely? Hurt? Unfairly treated, frustrated or sad?  
Do you blame yourself?*

If the answer to any of these was yes, the part was likely to be an exile.

*Do you say ‘never again’, and do you try to cause me to behave differently  
by over or under reacting?*

If so, the part is a protector causing extreme behavior. I ask further:

*Are you desperate? Do you think I deserve it, or they deserve it? Does  
your need or the relief you bring end in shame or rationalization?*

In this case, the part is likely a firefighter.

*Are you telling me what I should or shouldn’t do? Are you trying to make  
me look good?*

In this case, the part is likely a manager. I also ask the protectors:

*What did you believe would happen if you did not intervene?*

*Who is the exile, that you are working so hard to protect?*

Conclusively, I thank them for their service and loyalty and make a point to understand and forgive them for the undesired outcomes they cause. Naturally, parts are not always a neat fit in this model and I discuss their intricacies in their characterisation.

I do not, in this thesis, approach the task of unburdening and the establishment of trust of the Self for each of the parts, mainly because this is an ongoing process with my own psychotherapist.

### 3.4.1 Choice of Internal Family Systems Therapy

The goal of this paper is not to assess the compared effectiveness of the various psycho-therapeutic models, however to simply apply a psycho-therapeutic model to my own case with the intent of personal catharsis and learning.

From this perspective, the choice of IFST is largely arbitrary and, due to the fact that I have personal experience with it in my own psycho-therapeutic coaching, is made because of my personal preference towards it.

However, IFST has the additional benefit that it is simple and once the model is grasped, it is easily applied independently by the individual without a therapist. As such, it is the basis of several approaches to self-leadership.

IFST is also non-pathologizing, and does not assume ‘mental illness’ or judge the nature of the parts revealed, assuming each is attempting to play a positive role in one’s consciousness. By appreciating the uniqueness of each individual’s psyche, it does not generalize parts across individuals, even though there are some common themes that tend to recur.

For the purposes of this thesis, the focus on parts and their motivations affords me a succinct vocabulary for my unconscious that is conducive to clear discussion.

## 3.5 Research challenges and trustworthiness

Due to the controversial nature of the data and potential publication of people’s association with failure, the identities of many of the companies and participating individuals are protected through redaction, removal or pseudonymisation.

Fundamentally, this thesis concerns my own subjective experiences and psychological challenges in the startup space and does not speculate on team performance, operational efficacy, nor does it evaluate the value of individuals’ contributions - all of which are outside of the scope of the thesis.

Similarly the HEXACO test I took is not a clinical assessment and is merely indicative of my disposition at that present moment. The difficulty in static inventory profiles is that subsequent applications of the test are known to introduce bias and so the results are subject to significant interpretation.

As a subjective auto-ethnographic piece, this thesis represents solely my experiences and opinions (N=1) and has only purely speculative value, predominantly in its synthesis of entrepreneurship with the field of psychotherapy. It cannot be used to validate theoretical models, but hopes to stimulate discussion and research in new directions.

Although the events of the startup took place between October 2016 through June 2019, it is important to note that intentional data collection did not take place until October 2019 after which many operational services had already been ceased.

This caused several data sources, including project management services, design collaboration platforms and customer relations management services to be inaccessible. As a result, the data and narratives suffer from lack of clear visibility in sales activity.

Much of the recall has taken place more than a year after have taken place and, as it is well known, memory recall is uncertain at best. I believe that the systematic

and general description of the events, combined by their emotional significance and reinforced with the data extracted in the form of a timeline provides recall of sufficient accuracy, but my opinion in this matter is elementary.

Finally, the process of the manual collation, emotional recollection and deep introspection into events that are otherwise deeply personal and highly significant to me has required me to confront myself and swallow uncomfortable truths as they were revealed. I ask the reader to reward my vulnerability with their patience and good humor.

## 4 Findings

### 4.1 My psychological profile

In order to better position my understanding of my behavior, I consider my psychological profile in the model of the HEXACO psychological inventory. In Table 1, I list my scores for individual traits relative to population norms, but only facets that are noticeably different.

To simplify drastically, my scores paint a picture of myself as a creative experientialist, with below average compassion and a penchant for disorganization. How then, did I find myself in a field where conscientiousness is the prime predictor of venture success, and openness to experience the opposite [Shaver and Davis, 2017]?

In my own recollection, had I taken this test during the inception of my startup I believe I would have encountered a very different level of conscientiousness, because my beliefs and motivations surrounding organization and work ethic at the time were fundamentally different.

Likewise, I anticipate I would have scored a higher level of extraversion - as a result of the high amount of networking and presentation that I was naturally undertaking and receiving emotional rewards for at the time. This trait is irrelevant to venture success, but relevant to my own psychological well-being because it provides access to social validation.

An earlier test would also likely have resulted in a higher score in the honesty / humility axis, reflective of my desire to appease our investors and partners. The origin of this shift towards the darker side of the axis follows the loss of my relationship with Kaisa and our re-engagement under the auspices that we had nothing to lose - and subsequent comparative success.

Interestingly, I had anticipated that I would score more highly on the emotionality axis, and I suspect that had I taken the test during startup operations that would be the case. My lack of emotionality now is likely more tied to a form of detachment in the wake of our failure.

### 4.2 My conscious motivations for starting up

In my Theoretical framework I define ‘conscious’ motivation as the reasons you are aware of leading to decisions and actions or, in other words, that you would use to explain your decisions or actions to others.

Trait	Facet	Score
Honesty/humility		Near average
	Sincerity	Well above average
	Fairness	Well below average
	Modesty	Below average
Emotionality		Below average
	Fearfulness	Well below average
	Sentimentality	Well below average
Extraversion		Near average
	Social self-esteem	Well below average
	Social boldness	Above average
	Liveliness	Well below average
Conscientiousness		Below average
	Organization	Well below average
	Prudence	Well below average
Openness to experience		Well above average
	Aesthetic appreciation	Well above average
	Inquisitiveness	Well above average
	Creativity	Well above average
	Unconventionality	Well above average
Altruism		Well below average

Table 1: Notable personal traits under the HEXACO inventory

I argue that the reasons for founding the company are conscious, due to their publicity and accountability towards the other founders, investors and team members. So, in order to understand my conscious motivations, a good place to look are my motivations for founding ShotPro in the first place.

In the beginning of startup experience, we were asked to create a video that detailed the learnings we wished to attain from the course, which I found highly relevant, since I also describe the reasons why I want to do this startup in the first place.

The video includes the phrases “break out of bubble”, “can’t do the rat race anymore”, and “make my own game”. These point to my general desire for non-conformity. “Learn how to take everybody on that adventure with me, pioneering,

exploring new territory” point largely to my propensity for thrill-seeking and an openness to new experiences.

Overall, the three main desires that can be extracted from the video, which I articulate as my personal desires to be gained from the startup, which are:

- financial power and freedom,
- leadership experience, and
- narrative.

#### 4.2.1 Financial power and freedom

*“Make money for capacity, power and freedom”*

The desire for financial stability has been a driver for my whole life. Ironically, my decisions to be self employed or to venture into entrepreneurship are based in a desire for freedom, which is simply the ability to say yes or no to various circumstances without fear of financial consequences.

At the same time, those choices have not been conducive to financial stability. It’s fair to say that many of my decisions have had an undertone of financial anxiety and my decision to found ShotPro was quite openly my hope to escape that anxiety.

I think above all else, behind the desire to achieve financial stability is an awareness that a) it cannot be achieved by doing the same thing as everybody else and b) that I would like to achieve financial stability in an unconventional, or notable, way, which precludes me from regular employment.

In the video, in the same sentence, I also express an extension to my desire for financial stability, which is financial abundance. Beyond stability, an abundance of resources means I can purchase production capacity, allowing for scalable creation.

Rationally, I understand that production capacity and financial stability allows me to perform experiments and engage in discovery. This is what I refer to when I mention ‘power’ - which means to enjoy some capacity for agency in the world and be able to influence change.

#### 4.2.2 Leadership experience

*“I enjoy leadership and want to learn to lead”*

I’ve had a tentative relationship with leadership throughout my life. I’ve regularly found myself inadvertently in leadership roles and in such unintentional scenarios, I perform naturally and well. However when I find myself in a scenario where I deliberately intend to lead I have a history of performing horribly.

As an example, I received extensive leadership training during my time at the Royal Military College, Duntroon in the Australian Army, which taught me formal models for leadership and management. Despite this theoretical foundation I repeatedly struggled to perform in leadership roles during team exercises and

barely graduated. I did graduate though, after undergoing a deep personal journey consisting of introspection and humility.

To contrast this, I joined the Master of International Design Business Management programme at Aalto University with the intent of being a student and engaging my curiosity, and found myself repeatedly in leadership roles - coordinating the entire class in our inaugural project, MCing at the class' Christmas party and leading my team during our industry project. I found that relating to my classmates, and being 'seen' as a public speaker came naturally and was, in this context, effortless.

The paradox plagues me to this day, and so I repeatedly test myself with leadership scenarios. I believe that we should practice what we find most difficult, and my goal for ShotPro was to further refine my leadership ability and close the gap between the intentional and unintentional - the theoretical and the practical.

In short, to find a way to be able to perform as a leader intentionally.

### 4.2.3 Narrative

*"My life needs a story, a narrative, an adventure"*

From my desire to perform as a leader stems an awareness that my personal narrative is relevant and the act of expressing it openly and vulnerably is a powerful method to attract potential collaborators and inspire them to contribute to my cause.

My life has been defined by a series of impassioned choices that contribute to my identity, for example:

- turning my back on my IT career to join the Army and fly helicopters,
- going on a pilgrimage to Gallipoli, Turkey for Anzac day,
- learning to rock climb and explore extreme outdoor environments,
- moving to Finland from Australia for love,
- hiking to Everest Base Camp,
- narrowly avoiding the wrath of Triads in China,
- etc.

From this perspective, the health of my ego is inexorably entangled with utility of the events in my life as content in a narrative, and I wish to keep the 'quality' and 'quantity' of these events relatively high in my life.

Parallel to this is my self-esteem in my personal life. I had just lost a large contract in my software development practice, for which I was responsible to a friend who'd also been involved in the project. My self-esteem was punctured, and it was in need of repair.

Self-doubt had been creeping in and affecting my well-being and health of my relationship to Kaisa, and my approach to heal these was to create a 'new chapter' in my story in which I redeem myself. Also compelling was the prospect that the



field I was stepping into was close to my ex-girlfriend's who practiced as a lawyer, along with a vast majority of our friends.

By my thinking, a better story means a better me, and therefore I am, in some part, my story. Wishing for a better story is one form of my self development. It was my trust that the events of this startup would be a positive contribution to my own personal story, and so would bolster my own self-esteem.

But simultaneously, I also realised that I would have to stay committed and continue the development and expression of my own personal narrative if I was to be successful as a leader. Little did I know, for me, how difficult this would actually be.

### 4.3 Narratives and introspection

The following are the narratives that I wrote over a period of several days following the recreation of the startup timeline and their immediate introspections.

It's important to note that the following narratives and their introspections contain only minimal editing, to preserve their originality. In several cases, names and identities were concealed to preserve privacy.

#### 4.3.1 Choosing code over people

In this narrative, I reflected on some of our first days starting work at Maria 01, the Helsinki-based startup hub, and especially starting technical development on our MVP. In these events, I willingly became consumed by software development work over social responsibilities.

The long term impact of this was to isolate us other startups and so reduced the opportunity for collaboration. Also, the awkwardness created by the situation likely biased to my decision to move into our own office space later on, a cost that could be argued was unnecessary.

*That's it. The Shareholder's Agreement and Investment Agreement was signed. The glasses, chinked. The wine was drunk and we fell asleep in the warmth of the knowledge that the journey we had envisioned was taking its first steps.*

*I was proud that we'd been accepted into Maria 01, an opportunity that Sylvia had arranged, and today was our first day. We had been allocated a corner table in the permanent coworking area, with room for our whole team and a few more.*

*My first actions were to carry in my spare monitors from home and set up a workstation. We were guided into the labyrinth of tunnels below the hospital-turned-startup-hub to a room overflowing with office chairs and told to choose.*

*Back at our table, I sat, monitors connected and laptop powered, and let the powerful familiarity of my hands on the mouse and keyboard sink in. It was truly time to get started. The money was on the table and it was time to take things seriously.*

*Our neighbours eyed their newest members. It occurred to me that good newcomers to do the rounds and greet their neighbours. I was the CEO, and had been the one leading our round and assuming the company's face. It was most assuredly my job to meet them.*

*I felt a little shy, preemptively exhausted, at the idea of the endless greetings and chatter. My fingers flexed over the keyboard and I felt a longing to put my headphones on and get started. The code called. I'll talk to them tomorrow. I didn't have the patience for random chit chat just now.*

*Weeks later, I avoided their gaze. It was weird now, not knowing their names. But that was alright, I was just a software nerd, highly focused, lost in a world of code. I'm sure they could see that.*

From this narrative, several parts are revealed.

The Introvert led to my leaning away from social engagement of meeting our neighbours. In this case social discomfort, or shyness, resulted in The Procrastinator coming forward.

The Procrastinator immediately rationalized to myself that I can talk to our neighbours tomorrow. There is time, there's no need to rush. People are understanding.

The Nerd emerges from a flash of impatience, distancing myself from our neighbours. The distancing continues as I leaning into the coder identity, as a valuable skill that makes me intellectually distinct. It reassures me that I'm smarter than them and that the same rules don't apply to me.

Later, the (perceived) awkwardness of the situation leads to an awareness of what I could have or should have done - socialized - and I feel embarrassed that I, as leader, succumbed to shyness. This part is the The Shamed, which is met with a hint of anger / criticism,

#### **4.3.2 Parting ways with Lexington**

In this narrative, I reflect on a conversation with our first sales representative who joined the team early on, only to be stalled on a lack of progress in product development. In this conversation, following his departure from the team, I start to speak to him, earnestly, about my wishes for his role in the team and the problems it has had, but realise that my communication has become confrontational. In the end I did more damage than any good.

This experience contributed to depriving us of a talented business development representation but also was the first experience that introduced doubt about my ability to communicate effectively at an individual level. This sense accumulated with the latent anxiety of my past experience in 'choosing code over people'.

*We sat side by side on a brick railing by the road outside Maria 01, our startup hub. I was inflamed and speaking passionately. I explained the hopes I still had in working together with him - just that it didn't make*

*sense to pay for his full time. I was explaining that this is a startup and he had to be prepared for uncertainty and the unconventional.*

*I needed him to understand. Being truthful and communicating my honest perspective was the most important thing.*

*He had turned up unannounced to our office a few minutes earlier. I took note that he took time to speak to several of the members other startups in the area before even glancing towards me. He was good - he understood how to play on people's emotions.*

*I realised in that moment that I'd messed up the opportunity to have a brilliant salesman on our team. He was a friendly and extremely confident figure, and had immediately made friends with the startups surrounding us. He was a practical and proactive person. He pushed us to do things. Much of the time, we resisted.*

*Our last conversation had been about reducing his salary and reducing the amount of time he worked. It didn't make sense to pay for sales of a product that didn't exist. I was also unsure about his vibe in the team, and felt loyal to my other founders.*

*In a message to me shortly thereafter he'd explained that, with no contract or salary yet, he, with all his skills and experience, had never felt so devalued as an employee before. If I'm honest with myself, I'd felt threatened, he set a higher standard which I, and perhaps others, felt driven to meet. His mingling with our neighbours was something I should have done, and I felt that I should have been equally as proactive.*

*The developer in me was immediately annoyed at being disturbed from my code stupor by his visit. He was, after all, causing the team discomfort, I re-assured myself.*

*Now we sat outside and 'talked'. When I was running out of words, he cut me off and calmly said (something like), "I get all that, but you are my CEO and I am your employee. And here you are speaking to me like this. My CEO! I just want to be paid my money for my work, you know?"*

*I hadn't paid him for his recent work yet. It was still early days, the company had been barely established. It was still self-funded, with no external investment yet, and we, the founders, were debating what the best use of 'our' money was.*

*I suddenly realised that we weren't talking, I was talking 'at' him and, again, in conflict. For the first time in the story of the startup, I had become the bad guy.*

Initially, I identified a part called The Accountant. The Accountant championed the decision to reduce Lexington's salary as it made operational sense, but I also considered the possibility that it came from a scarcity mindset. This conclusion didn't make sense, though, considering the expenditure I had rationalised elsewhere in the company.

There was some other part behind it, which was masquerading as The Accountant. I call him The Threatened - the part of me that felt threatened by Lexington. The Threatened helped protect me by emphasizing the financial logic of the decision, even at the cost of the emotional logic.

The Procrastinator part of me played a role as the reason why Lexington's contract and salary wasn't resolved.

A flash of the The Nerd appeared in the moment of frustration as I noticed Lexington enter and I'm distracted from the code. The Nerd is saying the code is more important and that I shouldn't be distracted from it which would conveniently mean I should push away Lexington's confrontation.

My conversation with Lexington reveals The Passionate part, which gets lost in the moment. It believes that expressing my emotional energy honestly is genuine communication, which it values above all. It needs to get its message across.

The Truthist is revealed as a justification for The Passionate part, leaning on the philosophy that the truth is the most important thing and that an honest expression of the truth in each situation will lead to the best possible outcome. The Passionate part is attempting to express its (subjective) truth honestly.

### 4.3.3 Firing Tania

Writing this narrative, although less of a particular event characterising neurotic behavior, revealed parts that delegated responsibility for firing Tania and feel a sense of shame over the non-performance of the startup.

The impact of this experience simply reinforced the subconscious failure dialogue in my mind. Having experienced the process of letting Tania go, the option of letting staff go became 'available' in the future, where the emotional friction involved had lessened.

*The sliding door rattled open and Sylvia entered, the weight of the moment pouring from her expression.*

*"Seb, I've been talking to her and I just can't bring myself to do it," she looks at me, exasperated.*

*"Okay, I've got it - I'll do it," I replied, robotically.*

*Fuck. The door rattled open and I walk back towards our second office room where Tania awaited, presumably unaware. I realise that the only reason I'd asked Sylvia to do it (that mattered) was to avoid this very moment.*

*The door to the room rattles open and I stride in, Sylvia in tow, feeling somewhat like a school principal, advancing on Tania as if she were a truant child. I feel the blood rush to my head and in that moment Sylvia and I, despite our recent disagreements, are as brothers in arms. Her anxiety from her attempt was now mine as I frantically scraped my mind for reasons to keep Tania on board.*

*The thick, fog-like tension in the room speaks before I am even able to open my mouth, and tears grace Tania's young face before I am able to finish my stumbling explanation of our decision to terminate her trial employment. My words feel official. Cold. Mechanical.*

*Tania was energetic and thoughtful, and took on her role as communications representative with infectious enthusiasm. Behind the details of our decision to let her go, was our own uncertainty about our financial runway, which was rapidly shortening as progress on our product petered.*

*I tried to explain to her, earnestly, that if we had the resources to spare we would have invested in her. My words sounded dead. Manipulative. Really, her only crime was being involved with a startup that wasn't performing as well as it had promised.*

*Suddenly, my role as rescuer had turned and I felt grateful for Sylvia's presence beside me. I've never, that I can recall, in my entire adult life made another person cry and yet here this young woman was - hurt and in tears.*

*When she later that night returned her laptop and asked for a reference, I sat her down immediately.*

The Accountant came to my mind in this story, however the financial driver for removing Tania from the team wasn't the only one. Behind The Accountant is a keen awareness that if my work on the product had been successful by now, we would be able to afford Tania. This non-performance transitions into shame.

I realise from this introspection that The Ashamed is not actually a part... but shame is how a part is feeling. This part feels like it wants something that it's not getting. That it should have achieved something by now that it didn't. The shame is felt by the Achiever, who is conscious of my success, particularly in the eyes of other people.

There's another, more fatherly sensation there too... a sense of obligation to the people around me, which deeply wanted to deliver the same success for them - It is keenly aware of my failure towards them. Let's call him The King.

In this narrative, The Truthist appears in robotic form, as I speak to Tania my guide for the difficult conversation is an awareness that I have to express my truth honestly.

The Empath is open to her pain and connects with the emotional truth of the situation. As the emotional truth of the situation is uncomfortable, The Truthist steps in to disarm it.

#### **4.3.4 Working all night before departing on holiday**

This story reflects on one of the most extreme periods in the startup story, where I have justified working all nighters and spending a sizeable proportion of our funds on external software vendors, an arguably risky move that our investors had cautioned us on.

The expenditure on third party services placed the company into even heavier financial strain, and didn't result in any appreciable progress beyond what had already been once developed. This pressure laid the groundwork for the future restructuring and taking the Finnvera loan.

*It was just before the break of dawn at Maria, as I stepped out onto the floor's balcony for fresh air. The building's hallways were empty and dark, rooms silent. It was the morning before Kaisa and I were to board a plane bound for Australia to visit my parents and friends over the Christmas and new year period. I had been working feverishly on our first software rewrite, preparing the project for the contractors we'd hired to take over and get things rolling for us while I was gone.*

*We'd agreed mutually to build upon off-the-shelf platforms as a way to speed up development, given we were likely to change many features in the coming year, anyway. We'd chosen more popular languages, trying to improve our developer recruitment. I thought that the changes warranted a new code base which I enthusiastically codenamed 'prodigy' and I had just witnessed its birth.*

*As I stood, I reflected. I had been working solo on our first iteration of our MVP for 6 months, and in that time I had still come short of a product that we could demo. We'd had no success recruiting, either. I needed help alongside my other responsibilities in the startup.*

*I saw it largely as my own failure. I should have had something, anything really, ready when Lexington was recruited. Months later, it was complicated, messy and every step I took felt slow and laborious. I was lost in my own echo chamber, being the only technical in the team.*

*I had sold myself as an elite developer. At least I'd considered myself as such. I had laughingly been called a one-man unicorn, and secretly I'd agreed. I filled my lungs with the frigid air.*

*I remember times in my earlier coding career where I had produced frightening amounts of code in a fraction of the time, yet now the same productivity continuously eluded me. I'd misled everyone who believed in my technical abilities.*

*"You told me you were an expert!" came one voice to my mind.*

*"You can build this in a month", came another, this time from one of our investors. The 'elite' developer inside me agreed. How the hell hadn't I delivered something yet?*

*At the same time, the other week, an advisor had voiced to me that his "only concern is that we are not spending our money fast enough".*

*"Maybe", I had reasoned, "my coding time was over". It seemed that I wasn't the brilliant developer you hear about, carrying famous early start ups. I needed to step back and embrace my role as leader instead. I needed*

*to let go of my obsession and trust other developers, who were fresher and more up-to-date. “You only get what you pay for,” I told myself.*

*And so last week I’d finalised the deal with our contractors. Setting up this project was to be my last great coding effort before I stepped back into my management role. I was reminded of my time in the Army where we were trained in an exercise for six days with no food or sleep.*

*It was a double edged sword... on the one hand I knew the potential of my physical and mental limits, and in the other was a sense that I had no excuse not to push myself again, given the need.*

*Soon, the sun rose and my team arrived to the office. I was groggy, but felt accomplished. I’d prepared almost everything I’d set out to do. I sloppily briefed our contractors, handed over the code and headed home to Kaisa, who was nervous now about my absence, and I packed my bags for our trip.*

*For months now, I’d seen my obsession take repeated withdrawals from my relationship with Kaisa. It was rare that I was able to have a present conversation about much more than the startup. My immersion in the code made it even harder to speak about topics relevant to us (or to anyone for that matter). I didn’t like who I was becoming, but stepping back into management would let me reconnect with my more human side.*

*I knew that I was asking more from our relationship than was fair to ask and I carried the additional burden of that guilt. At the same time, I was stuck... considering my startup’s end seemed to be synonymous with our relationship’s end. We felt the gap between us widening slowly and I’d felt powerless, panicked about it. Our holiday was one thing we looked forward to, as a place to heal and reunite.*

*Kaisa did her best to stay excited for our trip, but I know my exhausted self, neck and shoulders cramped, mind still lost in code, was not who she’d looked forward to having by her side on our holiday. I’d make it up to her in my home in Australia, I knew. I just had to have everything set up before I left to give me a clear mind, and I’d done that. I’d be there for her again in Australia.*

*It had been a lifelong dream of mine to experience business class on a plane, and she’d lovingly arranged by surprise to have our seats upgraded for the first leg of our flight. I felt like we were king and queen when we were shown to our seats. I felt a deep sense of joy and pride to sit by her side. I regretted my state, and that I could not be there with her, present and excited. I stretched out the recliner and woke up when we landed.*

A part of me, at this stage, has given up on the idea of being able to develop the software myself, called The Defeated. The defeat is taken with good natured humility, and is expressed as my need to step back to my management role.

But really, I'm ashamed - that I haven't been able to perform as I'd promised. The Ashamed...The King in my has let down its subjects and the pain of that permeates me.

Rushing to the rescue is the The Pusher, eager to fight with honour, with whatever means I can to make it up to my subjects, pushing through difficulty and long nights as required.

Shame similarly sits with a new part revealed in this story, The Lover - as related to my girlfriend at the time. The difference is, where the king feels his shame with honor and a sense connected to duty, The Lover feels this shame with a poetic regret, characterised by a more child-like helplessness, or even panic.

#### 4.3.5 Conversation with Sylvia in coffee shop

This narrative describes what is by far my most personally embarrassing experience throughout the startup story, where Sylvia and I meet having spent the last few weeks discussing parting ways in our foundership. What's interesting is the development of a mindset that results in my having a drastically different perception of the conversation from the reality.

In my opinion, my behavior in this situation contributed greatly to the creation of silos in the office, caused by a degradation of trust, and then cemented the combative nature of our negotiations from that point on. More importantly, I had turned a good friend into mortal enemy.

*It's hard to tell whether it's just the caffeine. I'm tight, rigid... adrenaline floods my body again. I'm nervous. Exhausted. At wit's end. The last straw.*

*In my mind, I'm sure of my decision. I'm doing a noble thing... I'd already made up my mind, and I've rationalized to myself the decision to try working again with Sylvia one last time so that I won't regret not having tried everything in my power to make it work. I owed that to Sylvia. She would be grateful that I had engaged fully to try to make it work, I'm sure.*

*A part of me is excited to tell her that I want to re-engage, to try again and give her the energy and effort to make it work. It's been weeks now, navigating this idea of going our own separate ways. I'm embarrassed that I've let it come to this, that I haven't been able to handle this more gracefully. I remember an emotional conversation with Kaisa. I was upset that my decision was causing my friend such pain.*

*Suddenly, I'm also angry, incredulous over the intensity and emotionality of the situation... it's ridiculous how far from professionalism and business this has all escalated. I've lived the conversation though in my mind already many times.*

*My frustrations flood through, "Why is Sylvia fighting so hard for something when we are clearly not clicking? Why is she making this so difficult? Is it the money? Is it the idea of failure?"*



*It felt like a battle of the wills, driven by egos and wounded pride, but tagged 'just business'.*

*"Maybe we really can make this work," I ponder. I know I haven't been the easiest to work with. But what I know is that if we change nothing, nothing changes.*

*I resolve that I have to be firm and to represent the interests of the company. That's my role as CEO. I have investors to think of. And at the same time, I have to do the right thing, the ethical thing... and that means giving it this last try... and being willing to put in the work to make it a fair attempt. That way, even if it didn't work, I would know that we tried everything.*

*Sylvia entered, and my brain flared. The top of my head and behind my eyes burned. I was in fight mode as I explained my intent and reasoning to her... my monologue spilled forth. I spoke passionately again. Emotionally. Meaningfully, I thought. This was one of the most important conversations we could have.*

*I was willing to try again, and I was willing to put in the time, but at the same time there were certain things I insisted on, that I thought were needed to have any chance of making it work. I explained to her that in her current role she was useless to me, and that we had to do these things to find another meaningful role for her in the company.*

*Again, my belief in truth radiated in my mind. It was of the highest importance that I express my honest thinking in this moment. In truth, the correct outcome would find us.*

*Occasionally, members of the cafe would look at me while I spoke, and I became aware that they were hearing the things I had meant only for Sylvia. I suddenly became self conscious and a picture of myself from their perspective flooded in. I had mortally embarrassed this woman in public and they glanced at me in disbelief. Once again, I was the bad guy.*

*I don't remember who left first... me or Sylvia. Actually... I must have left, because Sylvia later told me she had apologised to the staff, and felt embarrassed to have been spoken to like that in front of the whole coffee shop.*

It's interesting to note that there is a point of empathy in the fundamental intention of the conversation. I felt the pain of Sylvia's situation, and that I was causing it. I felt I owed the opportunity to her, and I had committed to trying to make it work. The commitment took the form of passionate engagement.

My conversation with Sylvia is headed by The Passionate part again. It sought to ignite. It was excited. It was inspired by the idea of re-engagement, the ethical commitment. It had a need to inspire change also.

The driving principle again, fuelling The Passionate again was The Truthist which believes that honestly express my truth to Sylvia is the most important thing. It believes that Sylvia will understand and appreciate the truth.

Through my passionate mindset, the original point of empathy towards Sylvia's pain had been well and truly left behind, and replaced with my own agenda.

Shame resurfaces again as The King recognizes that one of the parts has attacked one of its loyal subjects.

#### 4.3.6 Decision to fire design team

This narrative demonstrates the conflicting emotional circumstances surrounding my decision to restructure ShotPro and let the design team go. It's interesting to note that one deciding factor in my decision was my perception of the quality of the story it produces.

This decision was the second most significant change in the course of the company configuring it with a technology focus, but permanently damaging (I believe) the relationship between myself and the designers.

*I stood outside on the balcony down the hall from our office in the early evening and pondered. I questioned the decision I was closing in on... on the one hand, the numbers were clear... we were spending most of our money on design, and yet almost none of the design had been developed into a product so far.*

*On the other hand, we had a functioning design team and that was valuable. The lagging software development shouldn't mean the disbandment of an effective design team. In the back of my mind, though, I knew that the technical solution I was developing simply didn't match these designs.*

*I carried a sense of shame that the product development hadn't kept up with design or that I couldn't steer design to better reflect what I was building. The contractors we'd hired hadn't been able to deliver as I'd hoped, and now we were financially in ever shallower waters. That had been my decision, as was this now.*

*Sylvia and Jo, in particular, had been with us from the very beginning. This would be a betrayal to them. Sylvia, I knew, had been fighting to keep the design team and then, of course, our own personal conflicts also added to the equation. Whatever the case, the current working environment wasn't comfortable or productive.*

*Regardless, they had put their faith in me to steer the company towards success, and they'd made sacrifices on their own behalf in support of that. This was easily the third time Jo had redesigned our app. With a smile.*

*I pulled myself back from the precipice of blame, and reasoned that, whatever mistakes had been made in the past, the reality of the numbers was now clear. Our investor's voice rang in my ears, "You can survive a product being late to market, but what you can't survive is running out of money."*

*Now I was afraid of the reality of the moment. The thought of facing everyone and having the conversation was terrifying. I desperately didn't*

*want to do it. The story I wanted was of fun, abundance and laughter. I was back-peddalling and the longer it was delayed, the more painful it would be. This had been going on for so long that I'd gotten used to putting it off.*

*Maybe I was wrong, after all, and I was deluded to believe in my sole vision. I had just spent years at university being taught the value of collaboration. Was a failure on my part to provide an effective creative environment?*

*I thought briefly of Kaisa and how long she had been hearing about the problem, with no action on my part. I was embarrassed to have not been able to decide and act, and tired of being so tentative. Lexington's deliberate decisiveness came to my mind. Surely, he would have no hesitation doing what needed to be done.*

*Even if it was a mistake, the only way to learn from your mistakes was to MAKE them. I was sick of this vibe, and wanted to take ShotPro in a new direction. Progress is all about making decisions and seeing them through, and as scary as it was, this was the next chapter in the company's story. The story mattered.*

*I picked up the phone and my hair stood on end as I started to call the team, asking them to come in for a meeting, that I knew would be our last as the team we were.*

Based again, in a concern for our financial situation, The Accountant part comes to play, which as we've already seen previously in comes hand-in-hand with letting team members go and with a sense of having failed as The King.

Shame is a deep player in this scenario, brought on by The King and The Lover.

In this narrative, The King takes responsibility for the situation and blames his own shortcomings in building an effective team.

The Lover is also present, lamenting the negative energy that had been introduced into our relationship, and wishing deeply to be respected,

The Storyteller justifies the decision by evaluating whether or not it makes a compelling, noble or engaging contribution to the 'ShotPro' story.

#### **4.3.7 Decision to take Finnvera loan**

The alternative decision to taking the Finnvera loan - closing the company - was made unreachable by my sense of obligations towards our investors and to our new employee, Vladimir. In particular, the entanglements with Kaisa and the involvement of her parents as investors is a strong influence.

This decision generated the financial risk for the organization that meant we would not be able to close the company gracefully. Ultimately, this would lead to our bankruptcy.

*We were almost out of money. The difference was, without our previous design expenditure, we now had two developers beside myself working,*

*both Rocco, an intern from the prestigious Paris-based 42 and Vladimir, who had just arrived from Moscow.*

*Our technical capabilities had taken a leap forward, and our monthly spend had also dropped dramatically. It made sense, from one point of view, to take some time and push forward now. We had a new team composition with more potential than ever before.*

*The Finnvera loan, represented almost a half-year runway. Enough time to see us through to May 25, the GDPR deadline, and a few months beyond. Without it, we wouldn't survive to see the introduction of the very regulation we were working to solve.*

*I explained at the board meeting, that the risk of taking this loan meant that the option of a graceful shutdown would not be available to us. The only paths forward for ShotPro would be success or bankruptcy. A spark of excitement stirred.*

*There was something awe inspiring about the idea - I'd spend the last few years hearing stories about entrepreneurs who against all odds had pushed, committed unyieldingly, never allowing failure to be an option.*

*A tired me protested. Shutting things down was also a responsible choice. It was the natural course. The mistakes had been made. I could get a job, and the stability would give Kaisa and I some space and time to revitalise our flatlined relationship.*

*But it was also an admission of defeat. Kaisa, her parents, my parents, my friends, our investors... everyone who was rooting for me - they were rooting for me to succeed.*

*Defeat was impossible to consider. Kaisa's parents had lent me some of the money for the initial investment round and I every time I spoke to them they encouraged me onward. I felt cold dread at the idea of letting them down - particularly if I wanted to be able to stand proudly and ask Kaisa's father for her hand in marriage?*

*I had had one too many failures over the last few years to let this one just slide past.*

*Then there was Vladimir - he had literally just arrived, having moved his entire life from Moscow for belief in this startup. We'd paid a finders fee to the recruitment agency who'd connected us. How could I now suddenly tell him that he'd walked into a business that was closing?*

*I felt an impending sense of discomfort as I signed for the loan, shook hands with the Finnvera representative, and departed.*

Confronted with the choice of failure emerges the fear of disappointing others is the Pleaser, otherwise concerned with pleasing others, seeking their respect and approval.

The prospect of failure threatens shame, likewise generated by The King and The Lover, on both sides. The Pusher awakens to protect the Self from the shame.

A new part is revealed here, The Optimist in my overlooking the financial risk involved. The Optimist goes hand in hand with an excited view of the future. The excitement of going ‘all in’.

#### 4.3.8 Decision to pivot to legal tech

This narrative describes my emotional set several weeks after Kaisa and I broke up, its effect on our decision to pivot our product and my motivations behind it. Of note is a shift in focus away from a ‘pleasing others’ mindset.

This decision led to the biggest shift in ShotPro over its lifetime and led to a significant resurgence in productivity and the new product presented a real likelihood of success.

*Since Kaisa and I had broken up, I had been debating my commitment to ShotPro and felt terrible at the damage I’d let it cause us. I didn’t feel the company was important next to the loss of Kaisa from my life, but it was too late now - the choice in my priorities had been made for me.*

*Now, the startup was the only story I had left. And it wasn’t much of a story. I mourned the waste of all that had been sacrificed for the startup, with nothing to show for it, and my life with Kaisa broken.*

*I reeled at the thought of Kaisa’s impressions of me. Was my startup’s impending failure her embarrassment? What did she expect me to do now? Did she hope for me to pack up and go home to Australia?*

*Surely, if my startup obsession had cost me my relationship, I had better come to some fruition. Next to the part of me that wanted to walk away, was a part that wanted to make meaning out of my personal tragedy. And perhaps, make her and my other well-wishers proud after all. I had no other distractions now, after all. Maybe, in its own way, that’s exactly why we had broken up.*

*I didn’t feel any obligations towards our investors any more. The opportunity we had pitched to them had come to an end - my goal now was to craft a future for myself and Vladimir, who had come to Finland for this story. That feeling of selfishness was comforting. It simplified my concerns immensely. It was just Vladimir, and I that mattered.*

*I looked across the table at our board meeting with Sandy, Vito and Ron. They had witnessed my world come apart at the seams and had understood the last month had gone nowhere. Now, I’d hoped to return to the saddle and from our debate about GDPR’s viability had arisen the insight that the documentation troubles around GDPR are (in the big picture) the same integration problems all legal professionals wrestle with.*

*My technical mind flashed and I saw that a standard data structure for legal practice was the same problem that we had been trying to solve*

*for GDPR. Perhaps there was something valuable for which we could repurpose the technology we'd already built, only now directly targeting legal professionals.*

*I was refusing salary, and Rocco had returned to Paris. Vladimir and I remained, two developers, to push on. It would offer us a chance to dodge our earlier mistakes and focus directly on the two activities that mattered most - tech and sales.*

*At the core, Vladimir's loyalty and determination encouraged and humbled me. It gave me a newfound purpose - and I realised that I also wanted our push to be successful in order to provide him with the dream for which he had moved from Moscow.*

*At the very least, if we were going to go out, I would prefer to go out fighting. I would be happy with Kaisa, my father, her parents and everyone else knowing that's how our story ended.*

The Selfish part of me arises in this piece, pushing back and feeling a release from responsibility and prior obligations which were characterised previously as The King.

A tone of Machiavellianism pervades the Selfish part. It is concerned with its own ends and desires, and distances itself from its prior perception of ethos.

Paired with it is sort of anger, which energises me a part of me that I call 'The Defiant', which encompasses my drive to push forward. The Defiant is calm and distinct from The Pusher in the sense that the Pusher is high in energy and manic in its pro-activity.

Again, The Storyteller rises in me capitalizes on the opportunity to make meaning out of the personal tragedy. Actually, much of the storyteller's motivations seem to be about creating meaning out of events, beliefs and perceptions.

#### **4.3.9 Decision to file for bankruptcy**

Largely a decision made for us by circumstances, filing for bankruptcy was less tumultuous than other events. The most challenging aspect would be our identification with failure.

There is surprisingly little detailed knowledge (as opposed to anecdotal knowledge) available to entrepreneurs who are considering bankruptcy, and our decision followed months of trepidation and legal research, which was only possible due to the participation of Ron, my co-founder.

*In our final six months, we'd built a prototype compelling enough to grab the attention of some of the largest law firms and in-house legal teams in Helsinki. Vito had joined us in business development and helped us start direct sales in a way we'd never been able to before. We pitched and demoed to dozens of potential customers.*

*We were closing in on a deal to pilot our software that would fund the rest of our software development - an actual sale, not a loan or investment.*

*But time was against us, a related software platform had a new version coming out that our potential partners were obligated to wait for and inspect.*

*We'd run out of money already in the previous year. I'd used my own savings to pay Vladimir's salary, and now that was dry too. Vladimir had left, to finally find a full wage. With no way to pay our creditors, there was little option left - we could not wait several months more.*

*Ron and I had researched bankruptcy extensively, in order to understand how the decision could potentially affect our personal finances or future ambitions. The idea, once terrifying and shameful, now seemed like a reasonable instrument meant specifically to give founders a reprieve from their mistakes.*

*Overall, I was satisfied. We'd achieved more in our final months, as three, and broke, than we'd ever achieved with our full team and 200,000 euros. It wasn't a success the papers would write about, but I felt more accomplished than had I closed the company earlier.*

*At the same time, I was tired. Without Vladimir's technical rivalry and quirky enthusiasm, I had lost interest in working alone. I had spent all of my savings on our final moonshot. I was empty in every way that I could be. All the connections and knowledge we'd created would remain after we were done. It was time to start my rejuvenation.*

*My finger hovered, as I read my message to Ron. Hesitation held my finger in place as memories from my Army days flooded my mind. Shaking them aside, I tapped send.*

*His reply came quickly, "I agree. It's time to wrap things up."*

The Defeated part of me is represented by my exhaustion. It is happy to give up and be free of the effort required, it is explaining to me that my effort to date has been enough.

The Defiant part of me comes out in response to the rationalization. It feels like it would be a shame to give in now. It pushes back on the idea of giving up, and is looking for ways to push forward, even after the bankruptcy, noting that the connections and the knowledge could lead to further entrepreneurship. It holds my finger before sending the message to Ron.

The Storyteller emerges ultimately, recounting everything we'd achieved in the last 6 months and frames the conclusion of the startup a success, regardless of its commercial failure.

#### **4.3.10 Introducing my parts**

In this section I allow introduce the respective parts of myself that I discovered throughout the process of narrative composition and its subsequent emotional recall. In order to understand each part, I delve deep into their psyche in a context free of the individual circumstances of each scenario.

I approach each part with respect and empathy, however also refer to them in the third person. This dissociation helps to communicate my motivations across each part honestly and objectively.

A part of my introspection process was to recreate the relationships between parts that I encountered visually. Figure 1 is a relationship network diagram that demonstrates the interactions of my parts.

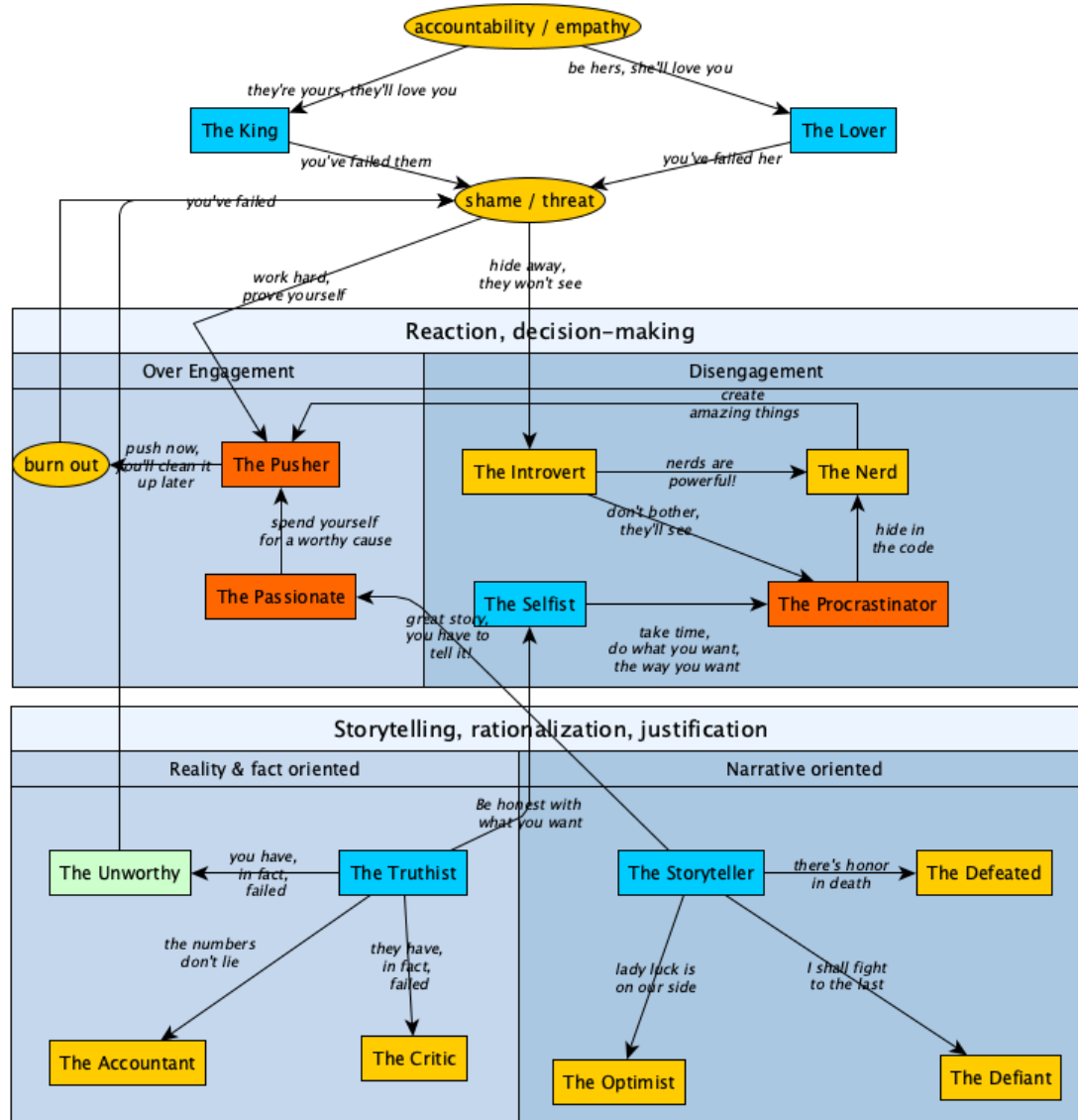


Figure 1: My family of parts

In the frame of IFST, empathy is seated in the Self, which can also be described as our 'observer consciousness' or, in other words, the part of us that is aware of our Parts [Williams D., 2017]. From this perspective this section is an exercise of writing conducted by my empathic Self, developing an awareness, familiarity and eventual appreciation for each part, and their relationship with each other.



It is worth noting that one part emerged from the narratives that was distinct from the others being neither Exile nor Protector - The Empath. It is interesting that I considered the emergence of empathetic behavior as the influence of a part when in actuality, empathy is core and resides within the Self. Perhaps this suggests that my empathy is not a consistent feature of my core Self or has been detached from it. This observation will be revisited in my 'Discussion'.

Throughout the narratives, recurring themes surrounding shame and accountability towards others arise. A progression can be observed starting with an initial focus on the external - with a sensitivity towards other people and their perceptions, and then throughout the rigors of the startup and accumulated failures a gradual shifting towards an internal focus takes place. The overarching story is one of pushing away those whom I feel I have failed.

Since the progression begins with a general, well-meaning accountability towards others which is contained in the parts of The King and The Lover, it makes sense, then, that we begin my introductions with them.

#### **4.3.11 The King and The Lover**

Underpinning many of my actions were motivations that came from a sense of accountability to my team, friends, family and investors. The majority of it is associated with my self perception of being the leader of this adventure and perceiving my responsibility to them and to the promises I made in that role. This part of me is called The King, and in the context of my relationship to Kaisa it differs slightly as The Lover.

It could be argued that the sense of selflessness in these parts imbues a kind of empathy and that these are parts close to my Self, since the responsibility that I feel towards them is the motivation to prevent them from harm and contribute to their worldly experience in a positive way. Although this is true to some degree, the intensity of my emotional response towards the prospect of failure in these responsibilities introduces another aspect to The King and The Lover.

As the startup story progressed and began to experience its operational derailments from its intended path, the accumulation of failure-related shames intensified and the otherwise calm, noble servitude of The King and The Lover began to be expressed with ever more desperate emotional qualities.

Beyond the core aspect of nobility present in The King and The Lover, they began to experience a deep need for reassurance in the face of failure and uncertainty and validation from those they relate to, in particular from those who I perceive with respect. From the perspective of The King and The Lover, the acceptance and adoration of those I related to is the ultimate measurement of my worthiness as an individual.

As experiences accumulate that serve as evidence to the contrary, the otherwise noble characteristics of The King and The Lover begin to take on a more supplicant, or compliant tone. In order to overcome the fear of disapproval from whom I seek validation, comes a need to please.

The most intense expression of this need is in the domain of my personal rela-

tionship with Kaisa, which is where I seek support and am the most emotionally vulnerable. The lover part of me, in this aspect, is particularly characterised by a desire for approval, a fear of failure intermingled with the fear of abandonment and a child-like emotional responsiveness.

From its persistent drive to spare myself from pain and its controlling, prescriptive nature, it is easy to identify both The King and The Lover as managers who, by promoting my perceptions of accountability towards those whose validation I desire, are protecting a part that is unsure, timid and tentative from judgement. As the failures accumulate, the otherwise noble and values-oriented character ethic of The King and The Lover gives way to The Unworthy part of me.

#### **4.3.12 The Unworthy**

Arising from my gradual accumulation of shame, the Unworthy part of me spins a prophecy of inevitable self-disappointment, of being discovered or ‘exposed’ as a fraud and thus condemned by those I consider closest to me. This part of me is burdened by the collection of all my memories that serve as evidence of my inadequacy as a friend, colleague or partner.

It is accompanied by a feeling of isolation from those whom I hold dear and whose validation I seek. In the grip of this part, their judgement has already been made and I have fallen short of their acceptance. Niceties arriving from their direction are merely small mercies conceded out of ethical consideration for my needs, rather than a genuine enthusiasm for our relationship.

It preemptively presumes myself as already Unworthy of their love and appreciation, so that, having already lost it, or having never had it in the first place, it makes me immune to the painful possibility of having it withdrawn.

It pervades my activities and intent with a sense of caricature, that I am merely performing to a tolerant audience in a role that is transparent to my unworthiness. I have no right to continue such a performance before an audience of such stature. It is at the core of my experience of what is popularly referred to as ‘Imposter Syndrome’.

Left alone and unaided, The Unworthy part of me feeds isolation, breeding loneliness and descends predictably into irrational and self-destructive behavior, such as procrastination, blame, self-diminishment and negativity. The fundamental ethos of The Unworthy is that love and acceptance have to be earned and it highlights my own shortcomings as evidence for being disqualified from them.

The isolation, hurt, frustration and self blame that The Unworthy part of me experiences identifies it as an Exile, for whose protection The King and The Lover encourage me to adopt a considerate and empathetic character. However, in the case that the burdens of the unworthy are no longer manageable, other parts step forward to protect it, which disarm the dependence on external parties for validation.

#### **4.3.13 The Truthist, The Critic and The Accountant**

Donning the robes of a scientist, a part of me arrives that is preoccupied with realism and the exaltation of facts obtained through evidence. It waves the flag of truth and

claims to have insights into reality that are extant beyond the scope of the present situation, that justify unpleasanties in their name.

The Truthist is manifested in multiple forms throughout my narratives, due to its adaptability, but the underlying tone of it is a presupposition of and an attachment to my own intellect. The insights that I am privy to, through my position as leader and through my understanding and intellect reveal truths that I am philosophically compelled to act upon.

One effect of this mechanism is an emotional overreaction in the form of defensiveness to events and information that threaten my perception of my intellect, due to it being the underlying justification of The Truthist for the behaviors that manifest in the spirited defense of my Unworthy part.

The Critic is one such character, who is preoccupied with the evaluation of the shortcomings of individuals, usually those who are either directly or indirectly a threat to my intellect or to my Unworthy part. By first disarming the worth of the other, it is able to protect the Unworthy from their judgement by removing my desire for their validation altogether. From another perspective, it is able to transform those whom I respect into those whose validation I no longer seek.

However, on occasion and when fact presses otherwise, The Truthist must concede that it neither is flawless nor blameless in its opinion. In many occasions it assumes the role of fateful messenger, and seeks to wash its hands from the accountability of the truth it seeks to deliver. One such manifestation is The Accountant.

The Accountant is known by its keen sensitivity towards financial strain and its actions and words are shaped by a scarcity mentality. It is pessimistic, in financial terms, towards the future and constantly seeks to reduce risk and find a measure of financial certainty. With years of experience this way, it feels well qualified to be the harbinger of bad news in the interest of economic responsibility. After all, it's only the truth, and in all cases - the truth wins.

The common, yet convenient, reverence for truth in these sibling parts is the justification for the gradual distancing from the humane and from an empathetic perspective of a situation. Such a mechanical approach spares The Unworthy part of me from experiencing the, presumably painful, emotional content of the situation.

The temporary relief, however, obtained through the arms distant and often mechanical interaction with the individuals caught in their sights is responsible for the infliction of pain, loss of connection or respect, and the accumulation of shame and anxiety in future interactions. These characteristics identify The Truthist, The Critic and The Accountant as Fire-Fighters that share a mechanical, emotion-adverse approach to protecting The Unworthy exile.

#### **4.3.14 The Passionate and The Pusher**

At the opposite end of the spectrum for emotional content sits a part who's objectivity and holistic outlook is narrowed by the immediate enthusiasm of the experience in which he is engaged. In that moment, he believes that the highest power in the world is to act with genuine emotional content and that in this way he is able to inspire and connect. He doesn't fear emotional intensity, embracing it instead. This part is

known as The Passionate.

The Passionate believes intensely in the power of presence, in the act of courage and in the value of honest expression. It champions values and rises to the challenges it perceives. It embodies a desire to inspire, to teach and to lead.

The Passionate is often experienced or perceived as confident and charismatic, being responsible for my performance in public speaking, my charm as partner towards Kaisa and my ability to raise funding and gather a team for ShotPro.

Likewise, it is behind some of the most embarrassing and anxiety accumulating events both in and out of my narrative. Its nature as a double-edged sword places it as a powerful but dangerous tool in the arsenal of a founder.

In either situation, awash in a moment of inspiration or carried away in a moment of delusion, the pains of The Unworthy part are a distant, even incomprehensible, reality. In a state of inspiration, for example during a public speaking performance, The Passionate energy arises spontaneously, displacing the anxiety arising at the vulnerable prospect of being seen by the audience.

In a state of delusion, however, The Passionate part delivers a monologue that is righteous and intense but espouses honesty of expression. In both cases, what is suppressed is sensitivity or empathy towards the other party, being the audience or singular, thus sparing The Unworthy from the cruel judgement of the audience or the understanding of the other party's suffering.

In not all cases does The Passionate result in pain being inflicted or shame, nor in all cases is its relief temporary - in the case of public speaking it rises to the challenge handily. The duality of these aspects suggest that perhaps these are two differing parts, until we recognize that both are acting equally to spare the terrified Unworthy from the judgement of others whose validation it craves. To do so, it indulges in a temporary distortion of reality and engages in a narrative where it plays the protagonist or hero.

Occasionally, the threat of judgement is not incoming from another individual but is levelled against The Unworthy from inside when The Critic's domain is also self inclusive. Without another to blame, the blame is met with a passionate campaign to prove the accusation of The Critic wrong on all counts. A competitive, hyper-focused driver emerges, known as The Pusher for whom martyrdom and self sacrifice are not only second nature, but honorable qualities.

In the narrative of The Pusher, failure only becomes reality the moment you give up, and that's your choice. It secretly understands that its own commitment to the job inspires those around him to do the same, and watches carefully for them to rise to the challenge. In this manic space of hyper-dedication, The Critic's unfounded accusations of the self are, naturally, preposterous, and The Unworthy is safe behind its heavy shield of stoicism. Shortly, however, fatigue finds The Pusher and the shame of burnout threatens the promising narrative of progress.

Unfortunately, the burned-out Pusher and the suffering caused by The Passionate part's delusion don't go unnoticed by The Unworthy. These characteristics of temporary relief, self-sacrifice, righteousness and eventual shame paint both, despite their charm or pro-activity, as Fire-Fighters.

#### 4.3.15 The Storyteller and The Optimist, Defiant and Defeated

There is a common thread shared by The Passionate and The Pusher parts of my psyche, being the narrative frame of reference, which houses the idea that events and individuals are playing a role in a story. This part is called The Storyteller and it evaluates the quality of life's unfolding in terms of its storytelling value. It thrives in the realm of mythology and strives to live its own life as its own personal legend.

It believes in the emotive power of a compelling narrative and the inspirational power of an individual standing bravely and being seen and daring greatly (Brown B. 2016). It believes that people are captivated by stories, and the storytelling power of a founder's own life is the most powerful brand they possess, for beyond ideas, products and business models what they sell above all else is fantasy - a story.

Inside the very notion of the narrative frame of reference is that my life is subject to the perception, interpretation and judgement by a preconceived audience. At its core it approaches that audience with an intent to please, as much as it seeks to be pleased individually, through the telling and retelling of its own story.

The Storyteller loves to recount humorous anecdotes and tease audiences with the gradual disclosure of the tales from its life it holds in highest esteem, and considers it the highest of flattery to be blessed with the resounding applause, laughter, awe and approval it hopes to receive.

The Storyteller is willing to make concessions in order to ensure that events fall within what it considers to be an acceptable and engaging narrative. It pursues exceptional content in the form of daring moonshots, noble gestures, surprising plot arcs and inspiring redemption stories and when these are unavailable finds a way to frame events as meaningful chapters in the same storyline.

Above all, The Storyteller perceives a higher sense of duality where, just as we are called to rise to the opportunities life presents us, life conspires in kind to our courageous story by feeding us challenges and opportunities. Several themes for my story emerge in my narrative closely related to The Storyteller, in the form of parts that are attuned to emotive, narrative value.

The Optimist believes that despite the odds, events will turn out in its favour. It believes that courage will be rewarded, and at worst case, in failure, will fail daring greatly and that there is value of that as a story. It seeks the courage to overcome fear and the risks of failure.

The Defiant believes in persistence and that success is preceded by the moving from one failure to another without a loss of enthusiasm and that such dogged dedication is noble and worthy of expending oneself. It welcomes quiet self-sacrifice and it seeks resilience to withstand turbulent times.

The Defeated believes that, even in the tragedy of failure, beauty can be found in having had the courage to have attempted what you held in high esteem, and that failure is preferable to never having known victory nor defeat. It seeks to make a friend out of defeat and gives me permission to lean away from achievement. It also looks forward to the sympathy it stands to receive.

The shadow cast by these three parts reveals the ultimate nature of The Storyteller. Observe that The Optimist is overcoming the fear of uncertainty, The Defiant

overcomes a fear of failure and The Defeated overcomes a fear of judgement. From this perspective it is quite clear that The Storyteller, and all its faces, is a manager which seeks to spare The Unworthy from judgemental interpretations of external events, both in and out of its control.

#### 4.3.16 The Nerd and The Introvert

Throughout the startup story, a milder, more softly spoken part mingles with the crowd of otherwise boisterous, dramatic parts. It leans away from human interaction, from confrontation and conflict and craves retreat into its own space. It welcomes opportunities to work in isolation and enjoys the freedom from responsibility towards others and their criticism. It revels in its differences from others. This part is called The Introvert and it shuns expression in exchange for safety from vulnerability.

The Introvert carries the wounds of the past closely guarded across his chest. It remembers every time my joy was transformed into humiliation, love into loneliness and trust into betrayal. It knows that to stand and be seen is to be judged and perhaps found wanting, and so it is accustomed to spinning stories where open self expression and interaction with others are no longer necessary, or even preferable..

One such story is The Nerd part of me. The Storyteller's realm of influence reaches into the characterisation of internal events in this respect, and The Nerd is a character that plays a part of misunderstood brilliance. His intellect, technical knowledge and sensitivity to people's desires make him unique and highly valuable. This is the part of me that secretly agreed when I was called a one-man unicorn.

The underlying argument for introversion by The Nerd is his intellect, which gives him a sense of independence from others. He has a sense that many others aren't able to do what he does or that communication on the topic would be lost on them. At any rate, if they were - it would be of lesser quality than his own work.

The Nerd has a correspondingly optimistic view of his own abilities, too, and so often argues that it would be faster or simpler to do the work himself. Because of this, his ability to estimate time and effort in his own tasks is biased. Similarly, fuelled by a preference for introversion and his beliefs about his abilities, he has difficulty with trust and delegation.

The power that The Nerd commands over the rest of my psyche is seated in the knowledge that my technical abilities are my most immediately marketable skills and so is the part that is most able to handle financial pressure and disarm scarcity. For my whole life, The Nerd has been paying the bills and my other parts are yet to prove themselves in this way. As a provider, The Nerd is oddly 'the man of the house'.

Due to its position of prominence in my psychic pecking order, The Nerd enjoys an air of superiority and is threatened should criticism or evidence that may diminish his intellect be levelled against him. Such embarrassment is felt immediately, often clouding judgement and releasing an unyielding, competitive drive that will not stand to be proven wrong or misunderstood.

That drive champions what it knows as the truth, born of its intellect, and is now recognisable as a face of The Truthist. In the name of the truth and in defense of its

intellectual superiority, The Nerd is capable of aggression, criticism, impatience and indignation. He may perceive a righteous anger with which he can walk away and leave the confrontation behind, intellect seemingly intact.

With best intentions, The Nerd attempts to deliver a meaningful justification for The Introvert's withdrawal from interaction with others, but instead tends to achieve isolation. The actions of these two parts in concert often see temporary notions of superiority give way to loneliness, sadness and feelings of inadequacy, which are closely related to The Unworthy part of me. The defensive nature of The Nerd places it in the role of a Fire-fighter working to protect The Unworthy from vulnerability in emergencies, a task otherwise reserved for The Introvert who tends to have a more level and carefully considered approach.

#### 4.3.17 The Selfist

In a place of isolation, devoid of human interaction and meaningful validation, The Introvert begins to experience a drought of emotional fulfillment or incoming positive energy. The once steady stream of validating experiences carefully curated by the attentive energy of The King and The Lover, and The Storyteller's charming performances dry up and The Selfist emerges to take matters into his own hands.

The Selfist believes in the value of honest selfishness, more specifically that if all parties act in accordance to their personal best interests, there can be no room for problematic motivations such as altruism. The problem with altruism, he believes is its self-sacrificial nature, leading to an expectation of reciprocation and resentment if it is not received. To The Selfist, such manipulations are to be avoided, and armed with this philosophy, he sets out to ensure his own best interests are served.

Again, the intellectual ties to The Truthist arise with the parallels between absolute honesty, truth and honest selfishness. The commitment to a higher ideal instills a righteous energy and an expectation that all others in the space surrounding him understand and share this philosophy. With the assumption that others have taken responsibility for their own needs and desires, he is absolved of the responsibility towards them and takes on the archetype of the lone ranger.

Not all of The Selfist's energy is as extreme, however. Acting in one's own self interest is, after all, a function of effective self-esteem. The problematic aspect of this part is apparent when The Passionate part of me is engaged in a defensive activity. In such a scenario, The Passionate part of me goes hand-in-hand with The Selfist as a justification for its own agency. In such a case, it seems to be more the effect of The Passionate part, warping the philosophy of The Selfist for its own means.

Given the role of The Passionate as a Fire-fighter and its involvement in the more extreme expressions of The Selfist, I consider The Selfist to be a manager, controlling my expression of empathy and primarily concerned with the prevention of loneliness and the disarmament of responsibility for others. With the disarmament of that responsibility, the possibility of failure is eliminated and The Introvert and The Unworthy are spared such trauma.

### 4.3.18 The Procrastinator

A residual phenomenon alongside the emergence of The Introvert and The Selfist is the presence of The Procrastinator, one of the most elusive and complicated parts of my psyche. It emerges when difficulty, or perceived difficulty, is faced, be it in the form of complexity or discomfort, and seeks to avoid the problem by shifting priorities, drifting attention, resurrecting old bad habits and presenting an intellectual argument for an alternative activity.

It is marked by a constant feeling that there is something else, forgotten, that is more important to do and that spending time on the present task is going to result in a problem. The pull away from the present activity makes it impossible to achieve a state of 'flow', and the mental strain of being pulled in both directions results in the suggestion, "just take a break". It rightfully, but conveniently, disarms the Pusher and protests the extreme startup work ethic.

Intuitively, a fear of failure could drive The Procrastinator. After all, without ever truly engaging in the activity he can claim that he never failed because he never truly attempted. The fear of failure takes the form of an aversion to full and complete commitment to the task, for fear that his absolute commitment will be found wanting.

The story arc to accompany these scenarios - The Defeatist elevates, to some extent, the tragedy of a great attempt having failed. This is inconsistent, though, because through The Procrastinator it knows that full commitment was lacking. There is instead an alternative motivation which causes The Procrastinator to pull away from the task at hand.

Having spent time in the realm of The Selfist, The Nerd and The Introvert, my responsibility towards others has been removed. The once radiant splendour of The King and The Lover has atrophied and the awareness that I am a lone ranger permeates, and that I have assumed all responsibility for success, having pushed all others away.

The rational understanding that I can't do it alone, despite the brave battle cry of The Nerd, still exists in a more mature and experienced Self. In order to succeed I will need others and the others, I know, are no longer standing by my side. The weight of the task at hand sees my desire for success diminish. At the worst, the most terrifying scenario is that I do, in fact, succeed.

To stand and to be seen in the light of success but knowing that I have failed as The King and The Lover and to stand alone is a tragedy that The Storyteller doesn't wish to tell. To stand alone in that light, even in victory, is to lay bare my failure for all to see. In that scene, I stand terrified, having been exposed, discovered as The Nerd, The Selfist and The Introvert and not as The King and The Lover as I had hoped.

How, then, even in success, could I hope to continue a meaningful story alone with The King and The Lover in exile? The success at which I will have arrived will have been despite my character, and not deserving because of it. Better to never have found success than to dance and perform to a false victory.

The Procrastinator is the ultimate manager of my self worth. Where in one



perspective The Procrastinator is the saboteur, preventing me from moving forward, there is a strange sense of nobility within it, as it seeks also to protect me from success undeserved, from dishonesty and from the ingenuine achievement. It seeks to limit my outcomes simultaneously in accordance within the acceptable boundaries of The Unworthy, by acting upon my own perception of my worthiness.

#### 4.4 The conflicts in my family of parts

The parts exist in an ever changing continuum, rotating roles to protect The Unworthy from its burden, and adapting to the outcomes of other parts' behaviour. Many parts have different belief systems that conflict. In many cases, behavior exhibited by one conflicted part triggers the other part, resulting in a flip flopping that causes the individual to stagnate.

In my psyche, the parts at conflict, and thus the revolving parts causing stagnation are shown in Table 2

Truthist	vs	Passionate
Truthist	vs	Storyteller
Passionate	vs	Introvert/The Nerd
Pusher	vs	Procrastinator
King / Lover	vs	Selfist

Table 2: Ongoing conflicts in my family of parts

The Truthist, which is pre-occupied with fact and reality conflicts in principle with The Passionate, which is concerned with emotional honesty and self expression, and The Storyteller, which is narrative oriented and based in a partial fantasy or re-presentation of reality.

The Passionate also conflicts in its engaging energy with The Introvert and Nerd, who are forces that push towards disengagement. Similarly, The Pusher conflicts with The Procrastinator who also drives for disengagement.

Finally, The King and The Lover, who are predominantly externally oriented conflict with The Selfist, who is internally oriented and acts contrary to their otherwise 'noble' values.

The opposition between The King, The Lover and The Selfist is perhaps the greatest source of incongruence in my psyche.

#### 4.5 Revealing my unconscious motivations

Throughout the parts described, many parts appear with several faces. For example, The Defiant, The Defeated and The Optimist are faces of The Storyteller. In these faces, the same fundamental motivations are shared, but expressed differently in response to varying circumstances. For the sake of focusing on my underlying

unconscious motivations, I have considered these faces and parts as a single grouping and detail them in Tables 3, 4 and 5.

Exiles are not typically associated with specific behavior, as it is the protectors that arise to shield them from the wounds they bear. It is, however, possibly to speculate on their motivations, by seeing where their beliefs lie and specifically where their wounds came about by those beliefs have been betrayed.

	Motivation	Fear	Belief	Need
The Unworthy	Disqualification from love and appreciation	Judgement, anger and abandonment	Love and appreciation are earned	Belonging

Table 3: Exiles and their motivations

By far, the most pressing need observed in the parts is that of validation and acceptance, or similar needs based on an external locus of control. These external needs can be characterised as a fundamental motivation to seek out interpersonal connection, or their opposite extreme. On this basis, the motivations of the parts can be grouped into two core themes:

*“I need connection” - driving The Unworthy, The The King, The Lover, The Storyteller, The Nerd, The Passionate and The Introvert.*

and,

*“I don’t need connection” - driving The Truthist, The Procrastinator and The Selfist.*

Other needs that emerge contrary to the drive for connection, such as the need for autonomy, freedom from responsibility and predictability have the underlying motivation that when the possibility of connection is made to seem unlikely, they act to disarm the need and so soften the prospect of abandonment.

With regards to Hypothesis 1, these observations demonstrate a significant difference between my unconscious motivations, which center on conceptualizing my underlying interpersonal needs, and those described in my conscious motivations. In actuality, my conscious motivations can each be also described in terms of my fundamental drive for connection.

In response to this, I propose that Hypothesis 1 stands valid.

*Hypothesis 1: Motivations revealed by ‘extreme’ parts under IFST are appreciably different from my consciously expressed motivations, and more consistent in explaining my changing behavior.*

	Motivation	Fear	Belief	Need
The King / The Lover	Accountability, creating positive experiences for others	Being labelled irresponsible / unreliable	Others' experience is my responsibility	Respect, closeness, affection
The Storyteller	Ensuring narrative, emotive quality of life experiences	Being boring, conventional, having no story to tell, or unwilling to tell my story in a conversation.	A good life tells a good story	Pride, Admiration
The Introvert	Independence from others' influence or judgement	Being humiliated, ridiculed or giving a bad impression.	Other people are more trouble than they're worth	Validation, Acceptance
The Selfist	Promotion of my own interests	Being left behind, coming up empty handed	If I don't look out for myself, nobody else will	Autonomy, freedom
The Procrasti- nator	Prevent the outcome of the game by not playing	Being exposed, in success (or failure), to be of poor character	It's easier not to play than to be seen and embarrassed	Permission and re-assurance to succeed (or fail)
		Responsibility and the influence of suc- cess/failure	It's easier not to play than to change and deal with the outcome	Predictability, freedom from responsibility

Table 4: Managers and their motivations

## 4.6 My changing behavioral traits

In the inception of the startup, my character exhibited higher levels of conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness and honesty / humility. This is also reflected in my initial conscious motivations which were far more dependent on external validation,

	Motivation	Fear	Belief	Need
The Truthist	To disarm emotion in favour of fact	Empathizing with the pain I am about to or have just caused	The truth always wins	Self assurance
The Nerd	To be correct, or to win through my intellect	Being ‘uncool’ as a nerd but being found to be ‘stupid’ regardless.	I am smarter than the problem	Validation, Acceptance
The Passionate	To communicate honestly and with emotional content	Regret, not rising to the challenge of the moment, or having the courage to express myself.	Honest, courageous self expression always wins	Pride, Admiration, Influence

Table 5: Firefighters and their motivations

e.g. drive for agency in the world, lead others in positive experiences and be able to perceive my own life a ‘good story’.

As my initial motivations are closely tied to the perceptions of others, they are most closely based in empathy and I perceive my responsibilities in the eyes of The King and The Lover. This is also the time in the startup story when I am closest to my Self.

Generally, it can be observed that my motivations from this point onwards moved from an external orientation to an internal one in defensive of my starving exile, The Unworthy, which is heavily dependent on external validation. The resulting parts that emerge distance my actions from my Self, seeking to ‘obtain’ connection or shun it. These reactions resulted in a reduced extraversion, increased emotionality, decreased humility/honesty factor. Parts also exhibiting these traits include The Nerd, The Truthist, The Introvert and The Selfist).

As the startup progressed further, events that acted as evidence to The Unworthy part of my psyche, such as those shame-inflicting cases involving The Passionate, caused The Procrastinator to strengthen reflected as a drop in my conscientiousness. The change is a shielding of The Unworthy to avoid the confrontation of undeserved success/praise or condemnation of failure.

Towards the end of the startup, at the fullest expression of my internal motivations, even when contrary to commonly held ethical beliefs about selfishness, my behavior

ironically resulted in more success. I speculate that this is due to the inherently increased honesty and agency that I discovered when my perceived accountability to others was removed. Effectively, a drop in need for external validation resulted in a shift towards an internal locus of control and increased self efficacy.

The final push and pivot of the startup is a characteristic of decreased agreeableness, decreased honest/humility and a resurgence in my conscientiousness as a result of increased self efficacy, which tentatively reflect the traits that are correlated with venture success.

With consideration to these observations, understanding the emergence of various parts throughout the startup story resulted in the expression of different behavioral traits, I consider Hypothesis 2 to be valid:

*Hypothesis 2: My expressed behavioral traits at startup inception, operation and failure respectively differ significantly according to the HEXACO model.*

## 4.7 Relative maturity of conscious and unconscious motivations

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a general drop over time from Self-actualisation to Esteem, Love and Belonging to even Safety Needs can be observed.

Specifically, the conscious motivations I proposed at the beginning of the venture, including money for power, narrative and the leadership of others, are largely attributable to motivations under 'Self-actualisation', Tier 5.

Comparatively, the motivations revealed by my unconscious introspection tend to center around my desire for interpersonal connection, located at 'Love and belonging', Tier 3.

This reveals a different level of maturity between the motivations I express in the face of critique, or in ideal situations and my unconscious motivations. As a result of this difference, I consider Hypothesis 3 to be valid.

*Hypothesis 3: The compared 'maturity' of my conscious and unconscious motivations under Maslow's model, expressed as a position on his hierarchy of needs, differ appreciably.*

## 5 Discussion

The vastness and complexity of the psychological domain that founders experience is unmatched. My mind contains visions of a balance sheet, pinned to my name, listing our investors' losses in oversized, red writing, and simultaneously, visualizes the story on great scrolls telling of the great legend conferring upon me unique experience and privileged wisdom.

One thing that strikes me is how personally centered my stories are. Of course, my goal was to provide a subjective interpretation, however I realise the degree to which the decisions and events were all heavily influenced by my personal motivations. It's

fantastic and unavoidable how deeply an owner/founder's motivations and identity become the company itself. The game is one of high stakes.

Founders, with their unavoidable personal investment in their venture are subject to the psychological tidal forces of failure, as the evidence that reinforces anxiety (The Unworthy), and of success, which in turn justifies their narcissism (The Passionate). It's no wonder that psychological illness is rife in the otherwise energetic and highly connected community.

In my case, the mechanism by which protectors arise is predominantly shame beginning with a failure of responsibilities perceived by The King and The Lover. The mechanism of protection seems much of the time to be associated with pro-activity or perceived reparative measures such as firing Lexington, firing Tania, accepting the loan, or trying again with Sylvia.

It goes to show that, to a certain extent, the operational activities of the startup are not always linked strategically to the business goals of the company - but also consistently to my own emotional needs. This buzzing, pro-active energy manifests itself as either The Pusher or The Passionate... both of whom are a variation on the same energy.

A comforting personal revelation is that of The King and The Lover's external preoccupation as being healthy and also quite common amongst entrepreneurs. It is natural to be concerned about our own image in the eyes of those we respect. The absence of such a response is narcissism.

On that note, many of the events I narrate are related to staff and letting them go. I take comfort in the fact that this identifies my own emotionality and points to the existence (somewhere) of my empathetic Self.

## 5.1 Understanding founder behavior

By getting to know the colorful family of my parts, several themes are revealed as driving factors in my entrepreneurship story, and which also may be relatable to other founders.

### 5.1.1 The terror of success

My examination of The Procrastinator reveals surprising complexity in its disposition, including a stark contrast between its motivations to avoid success/failure. A duality exists in the fear of success being that of 'fearing exposure' through the perception of undeserved success and of 'avoiding responsibility' that success might bring. Similarly, failure also brings responsibility, or from another perspective judgement of those I held myself accountable to.

The Procrastinator has a particularly strong tie to The Unworthy exile, which empowers it to believe that success is an outcome that is beyond my capacity to deal with. Likewise, being unworthy of success places it as deserving of failure. In the face of the responsibility of failure, however, it becomes easiest 'not to play the game' and its evasive behaviors emerge.

It should be noted that these findings are predicted by Atkinson's model of Achievement motivation, wherein a founder's motivation to avoid failure actually detracts from their likelihood of success, instead of enhancing it.

I speculate that the fear of success dramatically outweighs the fear of failure and played, in some part, in my willingness to rebuild our tech stack several times. There is a possibility that one manifestation of this fear is sabotage e.g. our acceptance of our business loan, which eliminated the possibility of a graceful exit. This decision effectively reduced my agency to avoid failure and I rationalised that running out of money while operating in a high risk, uncertain market is an acceptable story.

As The Unworthy becomes stronger, the likelihood of procrastination increases unless The Pusher steps in with its aggressive approach to motivation. The Pusher is equally unsustainable, however, rapidly leading to physiological exhaustion, leaving desired outcomes out of reach and reinforcing beliefs that again strengthen The Unworthy. A softer remedy targeting the source of unworthiness is sorely needed to disarm The Procrastinator.

The truth is that the psychological circuitry behind the aversion of success is incredibly subtle and deceptively sophisticated. It's common for founders to talk about failure, but even more rare is talking about a more terrifying prospect - success, about developing our self-granted permission to succeed and embracing the responsibility associated with it.

I wonder whether any founder has ever established and sought reassurance from a support network intended to deal with the possibility of success?

### 5.1.2 The benevolent storyteller

Throughout the narrative, the Storyteller proves to be a neutral player, contrary to my initial suspicion that it was likely to be strongly associated with destructive behavior. Consistently, it seeks to deliver meaning to events that are otherwise unavoidable or out of my personal control, or lend meaningful perspectives to my decision making.

The narrative themes that the Storyteller weaves its belief structure on are obvious references to great quotes by figures whom and from texts that I hold dear. They are heroes and scriptures in my own domain - Theodore Roosevelt's Citizenship in a Republic, Winston Churchill's belligerent optimism, the characterisation of personal legend in Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*.

Ultimately, The Storyteller is a projection of my own assumed value system, being motivated to write a story towards that which I wish to be. In this respect, The Storyteller is my driver for Self-Actualisation according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

The storyteller is surprisingly non-pathological. It shows that there is room in founders' toolkit for the partial fabrication of their own reality. I have an alternative interpretation, however.

Perhaps the representation in narrative, is a cognitive dissociation evolved to make it easier to confront the situation in which I am behaving in a manner contrary to my own values. By keeping the values locked in my construct of a narrative, I am

able to keep it comfortably at arm's length - like the child's tentative consideration of wisdom found in the form of faery tales.

The Storyteller, in my own narratives is present in the beginning, the middle and in the end. Perhaps its enduring nature is a sign to consider letting go the separate and competing conceptualisation of Life and Story and maturing in mindset to a single-dimensioned model consisting of only 'Life'.

### 5.1.3 Questioning passion

It should be noted that the nature of The Passionate's interactions shifted as The Unworthy strengthened, changing from being 'performance' focused to emerging instead within interpersonal interactions.

In this way The Passionate walks a fine line between Narcissism and Charisma, as does The Nerd walk a fine line between anxiety and intellectual perfectionism. The knife-edge inherent to either appears to be my own sense of self-worth.

The same energy responsible for emotional engagement, public performances and an aura of admirable courage, can be directed at individuals in a way that results in interpersonal conflict and harm to team dynamics.

Simultaneously, this characterisation of passion brings into question the commonly held belief that passion is necessary for venture success. To clarify, the passion referred to in this meaning is the single-minded dedication to outcome, love of the problem, the team and the relentless pursuit of its solution. Conversely, passionate pursuit of meaningful experience, emotional engagement and compelling narrative, while admirable and powerful, should be treated with caution.

Founders would do well to understand the true nature of their passions before trusting them completely.

### 5.1.4 Preference for performance over relationship

Given my role of CEO and activity with pitching and negotiating an investment round, the emergence of The Introvert in the face of talking to peer startups is intriguing. Of equal, and relevant, interest is the realisation that my performance during public speaking is largely dependent on The Passionate part of my psyche - a firefighter whose responsibility is to engage so completely in my own reality as to overcome my empathy for others. Useful in the case of public speaking, but less so in interpersonal relations.

From this perspective it seems that common, everyday interactions may be more emotionally demanding due to the absence of sufficient context with which to obtain help from such a firefighter. I speculate that the resistance of being unwilling to 'be seen' by my peers is shared by many founders because of this dynamic.

In my parts, my motivations were largely driven by my desire for recognition and my fundamental desire for connection. Founders tend to find themselves in this category [Shaver and Davis, 2017], however through my own introspection I demonstrated that such a disposition is volatile and can rapidly descend into the dark triad.



Consequently, in locus of control theory, which suggests that founders should be more internally oriented in order to maximize their sense of self efficacy and task success, it may be the case that the benefit of internality is simply their ability to succeed at tasks, preserve external validation and protect themselves from criticism.

#### **5.1.5 Addressing chronic unworthiness**

In the case all protector parts, manager or firefighter, their motivations are triggered by a single exile in my psyche - The Unworthy part of me. To a degree The Unworthy part is an over-abstraction since more specific and varied exiles could also be proposed as the varying faces of The Unworthy. I prefer to address The Unworthy in one piece, though, as the personification of my fundamental limiting belief.

Some of the energy of The Unworthy is provided from the Truthist as failures and negative events are gradually interpreted and accumulated as evidence that empowers The Unworthy over time. This intellectualisation of The Unworthy part of me poses a challenge for its unburdening in my own therapy, since there will always readily arrive new evidence to support the claim that I am Unworthy.

Particularly in entrepreneurship, shame and more specifically the threat of shame assault founders on the front line of psychological embattlements. Between being in abject fear of failure or success (depending on my mood) and a fear of failing in the role of leader, it is easy to find myself alone with no evidence of worthiness to the contrary.

The very behavioral traits that cause my alienation and reinforce my case for The Unworthy are simultaneously caused by the firefighters and managers emerging in response to it - a nasty cycle. Ergo, the gradual unburdening of The Unworthy exile, i.e. the rediscovery of self-worth, will consistently be the first challenge in developing a more robust psychology.

#### **5.1.6 IFST as a tool in founder teams**

One advantage of IFST is the naming and identification of the parts inside an individual and its non-pathologizing approach. It's focus on the understanding of the reasons for and characteristics of their emergence is particularly suited to team discussion. This is not a coincidence owing to its borrowing healthily from the Family Systems Therapy mode of psychotherapy, which develops interpersonal relationships.

In a team work scenario, an individual's knowledge of their own parts can serve as concrete handles to introduce these aspects of yourself to your teammates and to help them understand your actions in various situations, interpret the behaviour with empathy, hold you accountable and perhaps even help to instigate or mediate their unburdening.

#### **5.1.7 Other theoretical considerations**

Although my unconscious motivations are all centered on the theme of 'connection', meaning interpersonal relationships, it should be noted again that this is subjective

and my own experience. Other founders may experience unconscious motivations of a different sort, possibly in a different maturity tier of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

One theory that explains the change in my behavioral traits is the differential between the maturity of my conscious and unconscious motivations. If the unconscious motivations are centered around a lower tier of Maslow's hierarchy of needs than the conscious, then this incongruence will theoretically cause a shift in behaviour towards the lower tier, whilst attempting to maintain the auspices of the higher.

## 5.2 Practical implications

The overarching insight earned from this introspection is that the presence of 'psychological exiles', as termed by IFST, in founder leadership appears to have a direct influence on team dynamics and venture outcomes.

In this respect, profiling of founders with inventories of psychological traits such as 'Big Five' or HEXACO paint an incomplete picture of their suitability with entrepreneurship due to the possibility of change in their profiles. The primary mechanism of the exiled parts' influence is their potential to cause undesired behavior and a gradual shift in the founder's expressed psychological traits due to incongruence between their conscious and unconscious motivations.

A potential indicator of the presence of exiled parts in individuals might be a difference in the maturity level (according to Maslow's hierarchy) of their consciously expressed needs and the unconscious ones that they act upon.

Although the most direct path to mitigate the influence of protector parts is to undergo the unburdening of their exiles, but this is a lengthy and internally driven process. From an operational perspective, the key to mitigating protector influence is to configure the working environment in a way that disarms the exile's belief system that negatively reinforces it.

In light of this understanding and others, I offer several suggestions directed towards my own future entrepreneurial efforts, which may also serve well other prospective founders and their investors.

### 5.2.1 Observe protector behavior as a team

It's reasonable to say that the presence of exiled parts in a founder is an indicator that a founder's expressed psychological traits have the possibility to change. In order to manage these changes in an operational capacity, they need to be first accepted without judgement.

Prospective founders or investors may observe signs of impulsive behavior (firefighters) or defensive behavior (managers) in team mates and interpret their actions accordingly and open the floor to discussion by giving the behavior a name.

Founders themselves might consider honest introspection in order to understand the cause of such behaviors in order to develop a comfort in communicating about it with their team, perhaps even undergo their own therapy (not necessarily IFST).

In all cases, the behaviors exhibited by parts can be treated as an operational concern and not as an individual judgement or shortcoming.

### **5.2.2 Provide protectors with outlets**

Until exiles can be unburdened, the team can accept and redirect protector behavior from targeting the individual's teammates in order to break their cycle of unworthiness. In my own case, for example, protectors revolve around the opposing concepts "I need connection" and "I don't need connection". In the case that "I need connection" parts emerge, offering access to a free flowing emotional support network or an immediate form of physical or psychological contact is effective, particularly when it is offered independently by team members observing the behavior.

In the case that "I don't need connection" parts emerge, the motivation is more insidious because it further encourages isolation. In this case, access to a non-operational activity in which I can experience ownership, autonomy and decision-making whilst free of immediate accountability towards others is useful as a space to discharge the energy before returning.

### **5.2.3 Prioritize interpersonal networks**

Much of the alienation felt by The Unworthy exile is reinforced by the perception that my failings in interpersonal relations disqualified me from their connection having not earned, or lost the 'right' to their goodwill and energy.

The key to avoiding this trap is disallowing behavior that I might interpret as disqualifying, and preserving the belief that I am deserving of their incoming energy. This involves prioritizing interpersonal interactions over my own work commitments.

Although sacrificing immediate productivity, this is actually a form of conscientiousness that ensures more consistent productivity in the long term.

### **5.2.4 Establish a support network for success**

Being deliberate about establishing a support network to prepare for the unlikely catastrophe of success can disarm The Procrastinator's fears that success carries with it an unknown burden of responsibility, and that arriving in that position will make you subject to scrutiny.

The knowledge that a support network is available in case of success, and that they are already aware of your unique shortcomings and ready to help constitutes a comfortable landing zone with the aim of representing less emotional friction than disengagement or failure.

### **5.2.5 Be wary of dramatic passion**

In my own experience, I have let go of the idea that emotional intensity is a blanket form of honest personal engagement and grown to 'check' my passions. I have come to appreciate the difference between 'dramatic' passion from 'industrious' passion, appreciating when and where it may be harnessed appropriately.

Likewise, founders would do well to check the nature of their passions and ensure, in particular, that they don't revolve around emotional engagement in interpersonal interactions, which would indicate 'dramatic' passion. Healthy passion emerges in

situations more closely related to the individual's profession or to the core function of the company.

### **5.2.6 Create distance from your profession**

As a worker founder who also had the role of software developer, I often let my coding work take priority over uncomfortable responsibilities (The Procrastinator). Although immediately soothing, the avoidance strengthened The Unworthy part of me by distancing me from the values of The King and The Lover.

I suspect that for founders who have a specific professional background those skills provide a comfort zone that distracts them from their other, more tacit duties. I consider it the job of the founders to engage with the uncomfortable that other team members shouldn't have to and to do the undoable and say the unsaid.

From this perspective, worker founders should be aware that their core profession is a distraction from their other, more strategically relevant skills.

### **5.2.7 Prefer sweat equity over direct founder investment**

One of the greatest emotional obstacles I faced in addressing our issues in team composition was the personal investment in the startup that we made as founders prior to closing our angel round. These high personal stakes are very likely to have contributed to my elevated sensitivity to external perceptions and the emergence of The Unworthy exile.

In my case, the investment by other founders and their families and, in particular, by my own father and my girlfriend's parents established a heightened sense of personal accountability towards them that effectively eliminated the freedom to meaningfully discuss the possibility of failure, exit or restructuring.

Considering that any money contributed by founders is likely to, at first, be simply spent again on the same founders as salary, their direct investment also undergoes an inefficient and unnecessary double taxation. Realistically, the team would have enjoyed a longer runway if they had kept the funds themselves.

This economic inefficiency and the emotional restrictions imposed by perceived obligations lead me to question the prudence of founders' direct personal investment in a corporate entity. Alternatively, a sweat equity ownership model represents a more flexible and emotionally unencumbered approach to compensation.

From this perspective, I have developed a new appreciation for the role of early stage investors in removing economic burdens from the founding team.

## **5.3 Limitations of the study**

The greatest limitation of this study is its subjectivity and from this perspective I concede that as a white, male millennial, raised an only child in Sydney, Australia and subsequently enjoying the socialist welfare umbrella of Finland with (hopefully) postgraduate education, that I am not representative of the global population of entrepreneurs.

In this study, although I have applied only Internal Family Systems Therapy to my case, I argue for the general applicability of psychotherapy in the field of entrepreneurship. My choice in this respect is purely arbitrary and does not necessarily make the case that IFST is more or less suited to the task. It is likely that there are more suitable psychotherapeutic instruments available. The study is focused on my own experiences (N=1) and although I expect that my experiences are relatable to other founders, they cannot be meaningfully generalised or formulated into a theoretical model without deliberate further study.

In my case, my observations have been made without consideration or representation of the perspectives of my teammates and other stakeholders involved in the project. As such, my account should be considered interpretive and not factual, although due measures were taken to ensure events were portrayed accurately.

There are also considerable differences in accountability and obligation between my experiences as an owner founder and the experiences of non-owner founders or non-founder owners, and this distinction should be kept in mind before generalizing my study into all types of entrepreneurs.

## 5.4 Conclusions and suggestions for further research

This study's core proposition is that the deep, subjective analysis provided by psychotherapeutic techniques, in my case the Internal Family Systems model, is more effective in understanding founder behavior than those provided by the static instrumentation models such as 'Big Five' or HEXACO.

The entrepreneurial space is well known for its psychological rigours and extreme lifestyles and in this thesis I have introduced more recent research that also hints towards an epidemic of depression, anxiety and 'dark triad' behaviors amongst entrepreneurs.

At the same time, I have demonstrated that existing psychological research in the field of entrepreneurship seems largely focused on demographic categorisation and their predictive qualities.

This preoccupation appears, to me, to be avoiding the real issue of mental wellbeing and misses the significant opportunity in the cross-discipline of psychology and entrepreneurship - that of the benefit that can be gained by improving the psychological wellbeing of individual entrepreneurs.

In my thesis, I tentatively proposed psychotherapy as an approach to exposing founders' unconscious motivations as a superior model to understanding their behavior and champion psychotherapy as a low-cost and high-yield performance enhancement or risk-reduction investment. My desire is to elevate psychotherapy from the role of 'treatment' towards 'coaching implement'.

I demonstrated, in an introductory manner, the utility of Internal Family Systems Therapy in the case of my own founder experiences and offer my own learning and catharsis as evidence of the utility of true introspective, psychotherapeutic analysis in the field of entrepreneurship.

Before an accurate picture of the general applicability of psychotherapy in entrepreneurship can be made, however, studies on the use of other common evidence-

based therapies such as Cognitive Behavioral Therapy should also take place. In particular, therapy that moves beyond the individual and addresses interpersonal interaction and team dynamics, such as various types of Systemic Therapy, would be of use.

Based on my own intuition, I suspect that the role of mental health in venture success is understated and future research should also examine the direct links between founders' exhibition of 'dark triad' behavior, the prevalence of mental disease and their correlation to venture success.

The field would also benefit from a broad inventory of the maturity of founders' conscious and unconscious motivations according to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, in order to reveal more insight into the theory that a difference in maturity between the two encourages incongruent behavior.

#### 5.4.1 Final words

In reflection of my own entrepreneurial efforts, my own journey is one of discovering new emotional terrain. I hesitate to suggest 'psychological growth' because it remains to be seen whether my learnings will be manifested in my future stories, but I am confident that my adventure has conferred upon me enduring transformation.

I take satisfaction in recognising Joseph Campbell's age old prototypical story arc of departure, initiation and return in my own narratives. The Storyteller in me smiles as this chapter of my four year epic races towards a close with the knowledge that my own catharsis is complete. It seems fitting to him that I end this thesis in metaphor.

*In the softness found in self acceptance and forgiveness, I find within myself an armoured young man, a Machiavellian Prince, who looks towards The King, The Lover and the castle in which they reside in awe, yearning to be found worthy. With respectful appreciation for the battles he has fought, the dragons slain, treasures hoarded and princesses rescued, I show him the way to the throne that awaits him.*

*"Place up your sword... if you so feel," I offer, and, gripping the sword's hilt still tightly, he looks up. Upon the simple throne is an ornate wooden tablet, graced with the words:*

*"And I can be a softer man,  
of milder character,  
but true."*

*- Sebastian Nemeth*

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## **A    HEXACO Results - Sebastian Nemeth**

## **B ShotPro timeline and operational statistics**



Era	Year	Month	Day	Milestone	Public Events	Fundraising	People	Collaborations	Sales
"Max Hype" phase			23				[avp team member] steps out		
		June	14			Introduced to [primary investors]			
						Negotiating [investors]			
		July					[sales representative] steps in		
							[advisor] signs in		
		August	1	ShotPro Legal Establishment		Initial investment 51,000			
							[sales representative] steps out		
					MyData conference				
			18			Angel round W/LL 90,000			
		September					[communications rep] signs in		
								Started attending [games industry] GDPR task force meetings	
		October	23		[games industry] GDPR Games event				
					Legal Design Summit				

Era	Year	Month	Day	Milestone	Public Events	Fundraising	People	Collaborations	Sales
Founder Breakup Era					LDS "[ShotPro]" Side Event				
		November			Slush				
							Meet [Developer]		
				Move into Maria 01 Own Office					
			24		Pitch at Startup Circus		[advisor] reconnect		
							Engage [tech recruiter] re: dev recruitment		
				Engage [tech consultancy]: re dev work					
		December	1					Meet [comms rep] / [content partner]	
			7	Email re: conflicts with Sylvia, [designer] & [communications rep]					
			8				[communications rep] steps out		
							[advisor] joins as board facilitator		
	2018	January							
		February				Application for TEMPO Business Finland			

Era	Year	Month	Day	Milestone	Public Events	Fundraising	People	Collaborations	Sales
						Application for Horizon 2020			
									Pitch to [bank incubator]
							Engage recruitment with [tech recruiter 2]		
				Chat to Sylvia re: letting design go					
		March							Pitch to [tech startup]
			6		[investor] GDPR event				
						Awarded TEMPO from Business Finland			
						Finnvera business loan offered			
							[dev-6] starts Internship		
								Commence collaboration with [content partner]	
		April				Horizon 2020 rejection			
						Discuss Convertible note with [investor]			
						Finnvera loan application			

Era	Year	Month	Day	Milestone	Public Events	Fundraising	People	Collaborations	Sales
11th hour GDPR efforts & disappointing reactions							Sylvia, [designer] and [designer] all depart from ShotPro		
									[tech consultancy] collaboration starts
							[dev-1] joins		
							[advisor] formally joins as advisor		
		May							
								Launch co-authored articles with [content partner]	
			25	GDPR IN FORCE MILESTONE					
Everything is falling apart, personal life in ruins		June					[security advisor] starts advising ShotPro		
				Start discussions about Pivot					
		July		Breakup with [girlfriend]					
Legal Tech phase, ..		August					[dev-6] finishes internship		
					MyData 2018				
Legal Tech phase, ..		September		Pivot to [legal tech]					



Era	Year	Month	Day	Milestone	Public Events	Fundraising	People	Collaborations	Sales
attempting to rise from the ashes		October	1				[advisor] departs the BoD		
								Introduced to [law firm 1] / [legaltech contact]	
						Denied final installment of TEMPO			
									Start looking for consulting work (on side to make ends meet)
								Meet [legaltech contact]	
									Demo to [law firm 2]
									Demo to [law firm 3]
									Demo to [in-house 1]
		November	12		GovTech Summit				
									Demo to [in-house 2]
									Demo to [in-house 3]
									Demo to [in-house 4]
									Demo to [in-house 5]
				Attempt launch of Pioneer's program (crowd funded effort)					

Era	Year	Month	Day	Milestone	Public Events	Fundraising	People	Collaborations	Sales
Almost closed [law firm] and [in-house] with minimal prototype					Slush				
		December			Sleetmakers demo of [legaltech product]				
									Demo to [law firm 4]
									Demo to [in-house 6]
	2019	January		Start [tech consulting sales]					
									Demo to [law firm 5]
									Engage [tech vendor] for contracting work
		Feb							[retail tech customer] contract pitch
			19	Board confirms: all share capital lost					
									Demo to [law firm 5]
				Start seeking payment plan with extant creditors					
									Demo to [in-house 7]
									Demo to [law-firm 6]
		March							Demo to [in-house 8]
							[dev-1] steps out		

Era	Year	Month	Day	Milestone	Public Events	Fundraising	People	Collaborations	Sales
Bankruptcy & administration		April		Board decision: file for bankruptcy					
				Receive VAT return from Vero					
				Instruct [accountants] to pay creditor's invoices					
		May	15	Notification of intent to file for Bankruptcy					
		June		Bankruptcy filed					
		July		[executor of estate] takes control					
		August		-					
		September		-					
		October		-					
		November	11	Bankruptcy formally lapsed					

SUM of total_change_score		project					
year	month	baguette	initial	prodigy	stack	uluru	Grand Total
2017	5		7.64%				0.93%
	6		11.92%				1.46%
	7		18.59%				2.27%
	8		36.56%				4.47%
	9		9.89%				1.21%
	10		15.39%				1.88%
	11			44.47%			2.17%
	12		0.00%	44.96%			2.20%
2017 Total			100.00%	89.43%			16.58%
2018	1			10.57%	0.79%	6.05%	2.35%
	2					7.72%	1.86%
	3					24.61%	5.91%
	4				1.31%	50.04%	12.66%
	5					11.57%	2.78%
	6					0.02%	0.00%
	7	9.70%					0.99%
	8	90.30%			0.55%		9.46%
	9				19.49%		9.49%
	10				31.78%		15.47%
	11				13.41%		6.53%
	12				4.48%		2.18%
2018 Total		100.00%		10.57%	71.81%	100.00%	69.70%
2019	1				0.21%		0.10%
	2				27.93%		13.60%
	3				0.05%		0.02%
2019 Total					28.19%		13.72%
Grand Total		100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%

SUM of total_change_score		person							Grand Total
year	month	[dev-1]	[dev-2]	[dev-3]	[dev-4]	[dev-5]	[dev-6]	seb	
2017	5							0.93%	0.93%
	6			0.00%				1.46%	1.46%
	7		0.27%	0.47%				1.54%	2.27%
	8		1.19%					3.27%	4.47%
	9		0.01%					1.20%	1.21%
	10							1.88%	1.88%
	11					0.65%		1.52%	2.17%
	12				0.16%	1.14%		0.90%	2.20%
2017 Total			1.46%	0.47%	0.16%	1.79%		12.69%	16.58%
2018	1					0.52%		1.84%	2.35%
	2							1.86%	1.86%
	3	2.17%						3.74%	5.91%
	4	2.86%					0.08%	9.73%	12.66%
	5	0.74%					0.98%	1.06%	2.78%
	6							0.00%	0.00%
	7	0.95%						0.03%	0.99%
	8	7.15%						2.31%	9.46%
	9	3.32%						6.17%	9.49%
	10	7.92%						7.55%	15.47%
	11	1.36%						5.17%	6.53%
	12	1.28%						0.90%	2.18%
2018 Total		27.76%				0.52%	1.06%	40.36%	69.70%
2019	1	0.07%						0.03%	0.10%
	2	13.59%						0.00%	13.60%
	3	0.02%							0.02%
2019 Total		13.69%						0.03%	13.72%
Grand Total		41.46%	1.46%	0.47%	0.16%	2.31%	1.06%	53.09%	100.00%

## Your HEXACO-PI-R Results

Shown below are your scores on the six broad "factor" scales and the 25 narrow "facet" scales of the HEXACO-PI-R. (Each factor scale is listed in bold, with its four facet scales indented below it. An additional facet scale, Altruism, is related to several factors and is listed separately.)

	Your Score	Median Score (50th percentile) *	Middle 80% of Scores (10th to 90th percentiles) *
<b>Honesty-Humility</b>	2.94	3.22	2.41 - 3.97
Sincerity	4.00	3.25	2.13 - 4.25
Fairness	2.50	3.38	2.13 - 4.63
Greed-Avoidance	2.25	2.63	1.38 - 4.00
Modesty	3.00	3.63	2.50 - 4.50
<b>Emotionality</b>	2.63	3.34	2.63 - 3.97
Fearfulness	1.75	3.00	1.88 - 4.00
Anxiety	3.25	3.75	2.63 - 4.63
Dependence	3.50	3.25	2.00 - 4.25
Sentimentality	2.00	3.50	2.38 - 4.38
<b>eXtraversion</b>	3.19	3.50	2.72 - 4.22
Social Self-Esteem	3.25	4.00	3.00 - 4.63
Social Boldness	3.75	3.13	1.88 - 4.25
Sociability	3.25	3.63	2.50 - 4.50
Liveliness	2.50	3.63	2.50 - 4.50
<b>Agreeableness</b>	2.94	3.00	2.22 - 3.72
Forgivingness	3.50	2.75	1.75 - 3.88
Gentleness	3.00	3.25	2.25 - 4.13
Flexibility	2.25	2.75	1.75 - 3.75
Patience	3.00	3.25	2.00 - 4.38
<b>Conscientiousness</b>	3.00	3.47	2.72 - 4.16
Organization	2.25	3.38	2.13 - 4.38
Diligence	4.00	3.88	2.88 - 4.71
Perfectionism	3.50	3.63	2.38 - 4.38
Prudence	2.25	3.25	2.13 - 4.00
<b>Openness to Experience</b>	4.31	3.31	2.50 - 4.13
Aesthetic Appreciation	4.25	3.25	2.00 - 4.38
Inquisitiveness	4.00	3.13	1.88 - 4.38
Creativity	4.75	3.63	2.25 - 4.63
Unconventionality	4.25	3.38	2.63 - 4.25
Altruism	3.00	3.88	3.00 - 4.63

\* from a university student sample.

## Frequently Asked Questions

## What do the "percentile" numbers mean?

The percentiles indicate the percentage of respondents whose scores are below a given number. So, 10% of respondents are below the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile, 50% of respondents are below the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile, and 90% of respondents are below the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile. The 50<sup>th</sup> percentile (or "median") represents the typical or average respondent.

## Where did these percentile results come from?

The percentiles are taken from large samples of Canadian university students (men and women) who provided self-reports while participating in academic research studies. These percentiles might not apply to samples from other populations.

## What do each of these traits mean?

See the descriptions provided [here](#).

## Why are some traits given in bold, and why are others indented?

The traits given in bold are the six broad HEXACO personality factors. The four indented traits below each of these six are the narrower "facet"-level traits that belong to each factor. The remaining trait, Altruism, is a facet that is related to three of the broad factors (Honesty-Humility, Emotionality, and Agreeableness).

## Is a higher score better?

Not necessarily. People differ in their views about the "ideal" level of a given personality trait. Also, the decision to call one end of a personality trait the "high" end and the other end the "low" end is largely arbitrary. For example, we could have reversed the Extraversion dimension and called it Introversion, in which case people with "low" scores for Extraversion would have "high" scores for Introversion, and vice versa.

## Am I really above/below average on [this trait]?

Not necessarily. First of all, one can never precisely "know" anyone's level of a personality trait, which is a hypothetical entity.

Personality inventories are used to estimate a person's level of a trait, by averaging out responses to many statements (or "items") that are relevant to that trait. But if the trait were measured by a different set of items, a person's score would likely be at least slightly different, and could even be much different. These differences would tend to be larger for the narrower traits ("facets") of the HEXACO-PI-R, which here are measured by four items each; the broader traits ("factors") are measured by 16 items each (i.e., four facets with four items each).

A person's score will also differ depending on who provides responses about the person. A person's own self-reports would likely be at least slightly different (and could be much different) from the reports provided about that person by his or her spouse or family member or close friend. It isn't always obvious whose responses would give the more accurate description of the person.

## What should I conclude from my results?

Your profile of results is meant to give you some insight into your basic personality dispositions. But you shouldn't overinterpret your results or treat them as a kind of "prophecy" for your future. If you're disappointed with your score for a certain trait, you can still try to change some of your attitudes and behaviors related to that trait, and you can still find ways to make your level of this trait less of a problem for you (or for others).

## How can I learn more about trait theory and personality psychology?

We'd suggest our [books](#). (You don't have to buy them - you could borrow them from a library!) [Individual Differences and Personality](#) is a textbook for university students, and gives a systematic introduction to the field. [The H Factor of Personality](#) is aimed at the general reader, and describes our own research with explanations about the field more generally.

## Can I make a small donation to support the hexaco.org website and academic research about personality?

You certainly don't have to, but if you'd like to make a small donation, please feel free to do so at <http://hexaco.org/donation>.

## Domain-Level Scales

*Honesty-Humility*: Persons with very high scores on the Honesty-Humility scale avoid manipulating others for personal gain, feel little temptation to break rules, are uninterested in lavish wealth and luxuries, and feel no special entitlement to elevated social status. Conversely, persons with very low scores on this scale will flatter others to get what they want, are inclined to break rules for personal profit, are motivated by material gain, and feel a strong sense of self-importance.

*Emotionality*: Persons with very high scores on the Emotionality scale experience fear of physical dangers, experience anxiety in response to life's stresses, feel a need for emotional support from others, and feel empathy and sentimental attachments with others. Conversely, persons with very low scores on this scale are not deterred by the prospect of physical harm, feel little worry even in stressful situations, have little need to share their concerns with others, and feel emotionally detached from others.

*eXtraversion*: Persons with very high scores on the Extraversion scale feel positively about themselves, feel confident when leading or addressing groups of people, enjoy social gatherings and interactions, and experience positive feelings of enthusiasm and energy. Conversely, persons with very low scores on this scale consider themselves unpopular, feel awkward when they are the center of social attention, are indifferent to social activities, and feel less lively and optimistic than others do.

*Agreeableness (versus Anger)*: Persons with very high scores on the Agreeableness scale forgive the wrongs that they suffered, are lenient in judging others, are willing to compromise and cooperate with others, and can easily control their temper. Conversely, persons with very low scores on this scale hold grudges against those who have harmed them, are rather critical of others' shortcomings, are stubborn in defending their point of view, and feel anger readily in response to mistreatment.

*Conscientiousness*: Persons with very high scores on the Conscientiousness scale organize their time and their physical surroundings, work in a disciplined way toward their goals, strive for accuracy and perfection in their tasks, and deliberate carefully when making decisions. Conversely, persons with very low scores on this scale tend to be unconcerned with orderly surroundings or schedules, avoid difficult tasks or challenging goals, are satisfied with work that contains some errors, and make decisions on impulse or with little reflection.

*Openness to Experience*: Persons with very high scores on the Openness to Experience scale become absorbed in the beauty of art and nature, are inquisitive about various domains of knowledge, use their imagination freely in everyday life, and take an interest in unusual ideas or people. Conversely, persons with very low scores on this scale are rather unimpressed by most works of art, feel little intellectual curiosity, avoid creative pursuits, and feel little attraction toward ideas that may seem radical or unconventional.

## Facet-Level Scales

### *Honesty-Humility Domain*

The *Sincerity* scale assesses a tendency to be genuine in interpersonal relations. Low scorers will flatter others or pretend to like them in order to obtain favors, whereas high scorers are unwilling to manipulate others.

The *Fairness* scale assesses a tendency to avoid fraud and corruption. Low scorers are willing to gain by cheating or stealing, whereas high scorers are unwilling to take advantage of other individuals or of society at large.

The *Greed Avoidance* scale assesses a tendency to be uninterested in possessing lavish wealth, luxury goods, and signs of high social status. Low scorers want to enjoy and to display wealth and privilege, whereas high scorers are not especially motivated by monetary or social-status considerations.

The *Modesty* scale assesses a tendency to be modest and unassuming. Low scorers consider themselves as superior and as entitled to privileges that others do not have, whereas high scorers view themselves as ordinary people without any claim to special treatment.

### *Emotionality Domain*

The *Fearfulness* scale assesses a tendency to experience fear. Low scorers feel little fear of injury and are relatively tough, brave, and insensitive to physical pain, whereas high scorers are strongly inclined to avoid physical harm.

The *Anxiety* scale assesses a tendency to worry in a variety of contexts. Low scorers feel little stress in response to difficulties, whereas high scorers tend to become preoccupied even by relatively minor problems.

The *Dependence* scale assesses one's need for emotional support from others. Low scorers feel self-assured and able to deal with problems without any help or advice, whereas high scorers want to share their difficulties with those who will provide encouragement and comfort.

The *Sentimentality* scale assesses a tendency to feel strong emotional bonds with others. Low scorers feel little emotion when saying good-bye or in reaction to the concerns of others, whereas high scorers feel strong emotional attachments and an empathic sensitivity to the feelings of others.

### *Extraversion Domain*



The *Social Self-Esteem* scale assesses a tendency to have positive self-regard, particularly in social contexts. High scorers are generally satisfied with themselves and consider themselves to have likable qualities, whereas low scorers tend to have a sense of personal worthlessness and to see themselves as unpopular.

The *Social Boldness* scale assesses one's comfort or confidence within a variety of social situations. Low scorers feel shy or awkward in positions of leadership or when speaking in public, whereas high scorers are willing to approach strangers and are willing to speak up within group settings.

The *Sociability* scale assesses a tendency to enjoy conversation, social interaction, and parties. Low scorers generally prefer solitary activities and do not seek out conversation, whereas high scorers enjoy talking, visiting, and celebrating with others.

The *Liveliness* scale assesses one's typical enthusiasm and energy. Low scorers tend not to feel especially cheerful or dynamic, whereas high scorers usually experience a sense of optimism and high spirits.

#### *Agreeableness Domain*

The *Forgivingness* scale assesses one's willingness to feel trust and liking toward those who may have caused one harm. Low scorers tend "hold a grudge" against those who have offended them, whereas high scorers are usually ready to trust others again and to re-establish friendly relations after having been treated badly.

The *Gentleness* scale assesses a tendency to be mild and lenient in dealings with other people. Low scorers tend to be critical in their evaluations of others, whereas high scorers are reluctant to judge others harshly.

The *Flexibility* scale assesses one's willingness to compromise and cooperate with others. Low scorers are seen as stubborn and are willing to argue, whereas high scorers avoid arguments and accommodate others' suggestions, even when these may be unreasonable.

The *Patience* scale assesses a tendency to remain calm rather than to become angry. Low scorers tend to lose their tempers quickly, whereas high scorers have a high threshold for feeling or expressing anger.

#### *Conscientiousness Domain*

The *Organization* scale assesses a tendency to seek order, particularly in one's physical surroundings. Low scorers tend to be sloppy and haphazard, whereas high scorers keep things tidy and prefer a structured approach to tasks.

The *Diligence* scale assesses a tendency to work hard. Low scorers have little self-discipline and are not strongly motivated to achieve, whereas high scorers have a strong "work ethic" and are willing to exert themselves.

The *Perfectionism* scale assesses a tendency to be thorough and concerned with details. Low scorers tolerate some errors in their work and tend to neglect details, whereas high scorers check carefully for mistakes and potential improvements.

The *Prudence* scale assesses a tendency to deliberate carefully and to inhibit impulses. Low scorers act on impulse and tend not to consider consequences, whereas high scorers consider their options carefully and tend to be cautious and self-controlled.

#### *Openness to Experience Domain*

The *Aesthetic Appreciation* scale assesses one's enjoyment of beauty in art and in nature. Low scorers tend not to become absorbed in works of art or in natural wonders, whereas high scorers have a strong appreciation of various art forms and of natural wonders.

The *Inquisitiveness* scale assesses a tendency to seek information about, and experience with, the natural and human world. Low scorers have little curiosity about the natural or social sciences, whereas high scorers read widely and are interested in travel.

The *Creativity* scale assesses one's preference for innovation and experiment. Low scorers have little inclination for original thought, whereas high scorers actively seek new solutions to problems and express themselves in art.

The *Unconventionality* scale assesses a tendency to accept the unusual. Low scorers avoid eccentric or nonconforming persons, whereas high scorers are receptive to ideas that might seem strange or radical.

#### *Interstitial Scale*

The *Altruism* (versus Antagonism) scale assesses a tendency to be sympathetic and soft-hearted toward others. High scorers avoid causing harm and react with generosity toward those who are weak or in need of help, whereas low scorers are not upset by the prospect of hurting others and may be seen as hard-hearted.